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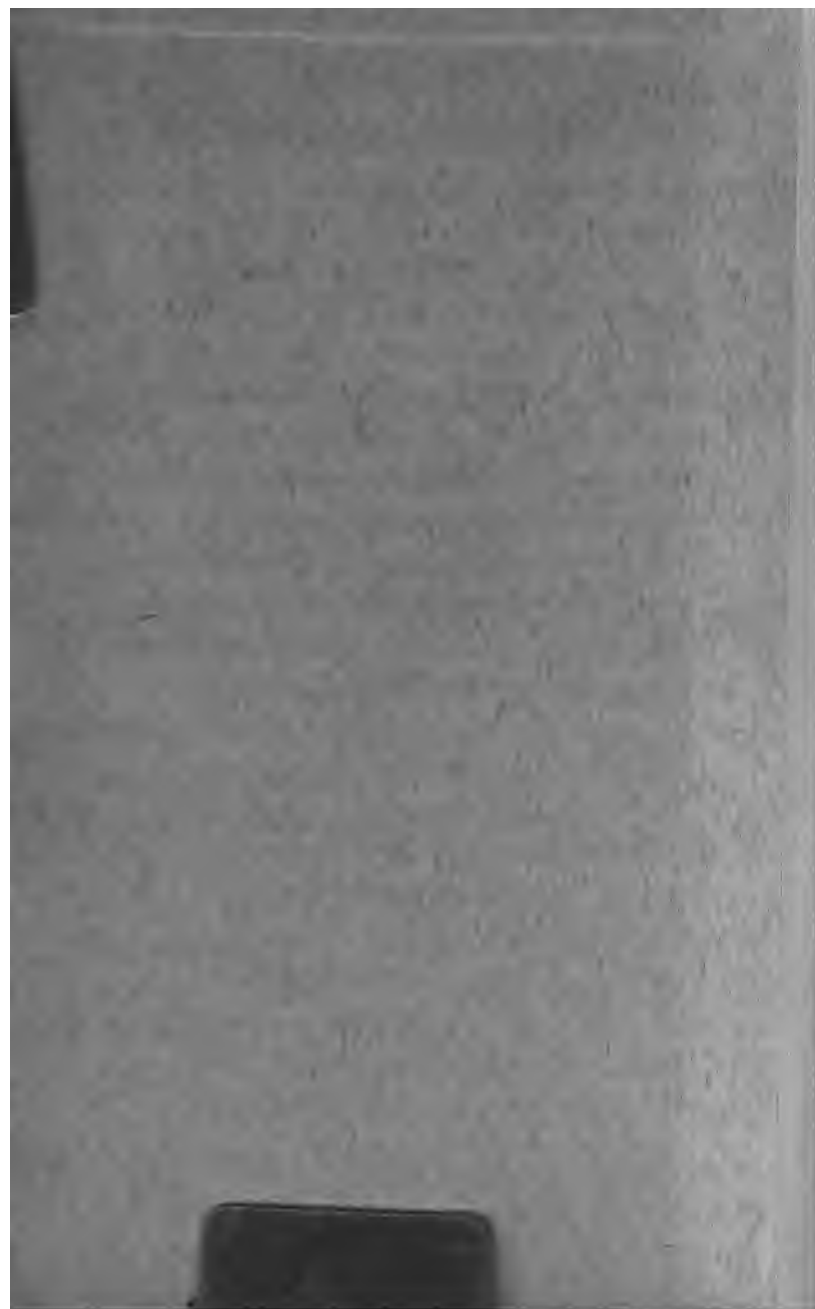
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MARYGOLD

Her Fortune

Her Misfortune.

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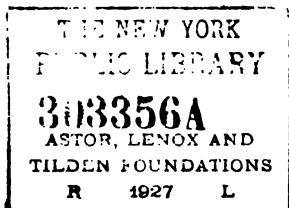
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To My Dear M . . . a

THIS BOOK

Is Lovingly Dedicated.

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MARYGOLD.

CHAPTER I.

TIME—Present. Scene—Bluepoint—that resort of millionaires to which it is as difficult for a poor man to gain admittance as it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Marygold Dare, heiress, has just arrived at "The Castle," her aunt, Mrs. Castleton's, summer residence at Bluepoint.

Every August since she was left an orphan five years ago she has spent here, not from desire—did she consult her desire she would never set foot within it—but from duty; and as duty is a mighty tedious thing (except to saints, and Marygold is no saint!) August is the longest month in the calendar in her estimation.

Not that there is any fault to be found with "The Castle," *per se*; it is the fashionable, frivolous society people—mostly of New York, with an occasional titled foreigner secured at great trouble and expense, as a

"drawing card," so to speak—that Mrs. Castleton entertains at it, of which that lady herself is a fair representative, with whom Marygold cannot agree, for there is nothing congenial between them—money is the only thing they possess in common.

If she were poor, these society people would not recognize her—nor would her aunt, for she is odd, judged from her aunt's point of view, and that lady has no sympathy for anybody who is odd and not like other people, for she is conventionality in person. Besides, Marygold is a Philadelphian, and Mrs. Castleton is a New Yorker, so there is one less chance of there being any affinity between them. But she is an heiress, so her aunt, like the rest of the fashionable world, overlooks her shortcomings.

"The Castle" looks as near like an old world castle as Mrs. Castleton, who worships everything connected with the old world, has been able to make it. It stands on high ground overlooking the sea, with a terraced lawn sloping down to the rocks that here bound the coast, and is built of gray stone, over which ivy has been made to clamber to make it look as picturesque and ancestral as possible, and it has turrets and towers and mullioned windows, and all the other

things that go to make up a castle, including a courtyard into which equipages can drive through a massive entrance arch, on the keystone of which the Castleton coat-of-arms is emblazoned.

On this court Marygold alights from the trap that has brought her from the station. Her maid is with her and another personage in her retinue, and a very important member of it, is Czar, a great Siberian mastiff, who, ever since she became an orphan and unprotected, has been her constant companion. Especially when traveling would she not be without this faithful bodyguard, who is as unbending with every one excepting her as the autocrat of all the Russias himself.

Sambo, Mrs. Castleton's porter, who has hauled Marygold's trunks up from the station, sits on his cart and eyes Czar as though he were his mortal enemy, though considering the number of visits Marygold has made to "The Castle," in all of which Czar has participated and never once seemed aware of Sambo's existence, that darky should be as indifferent to him by this time; but this indifference on the part of Czar (which is nothing unusual, but only his ordinary manner with inferiors—truly there is blue blood

running through Czar's veins) only seems to increase Sambo's uneasiness when in the mastiff's presence. He cannot be induced to get down from his elevated position until Marygold places her hand on the dog's collar, which is an indignity Czar will positively not submit to from any one but his mistress.

At this moment Mrs. Castleton, who has witnessed her niece's arrival from an upper window, looking on to the court; appears at a doorway on the ground floor to welcome her. At a glance you say: "This is a woman of the world, and a very fascinating one."

Mrs. Castleton (widow of Marmaduke Castleton, who was one of Wall Street's magnates) is a young woman, considering that she has a grown son and daughter, and even younger in appearance than she is in years. She is thirty-eight, and looks thirty. Mrs. Castleton is well aware—none better!—that she has cheated Father Time of his dues, and dresses accordingly. This evening her gown is a bewildering arrangement of black net spangled with silver, that sets off to advantage the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, and her fluffy blonde hair surmounted by a diamond star.

"My dear Marygold," she says, kissing the heiress

prettily on both cheeks, "you have arrived so late that you only have time to dress for dinner—and hardly that unless I delay it."

Then she speaks kindly to Nora, the maid, who has accompanied Marygold on each of her visits to "The Castle," after which Czar comes in for his share of her notice.

"And so you have brought his majesty," she says, smiling at the mastiff, who regards her with a look of unmoved gravity. She does not attempt to pat him, perhaps because she knows from experience he does not like such liberties taken with him, and always signifies his disapproval of them by a rather forcible shake of his huge frame, the same as that with which he might rid himself of a fly that bothered him. Not that he dislikes her in particular—he is only as indifferent to her as he is to all the world, excepting Marygold. He tolerates Nora, the maid, but only because he is wise enough to see that she, like himself, being a constant attendant upon their mistress, their relations have to be friendly—nothing more; he will not submit to a pat, except in a lordly way, even from Nora. She, for her part, is quite proud of his tolerance and of displaying it, for every one, without ex-

ception, stands in wholesome awe of His Majesty, as they are wont to call him—and, in truth, the title suits well his majestic proportions. They know (those who have been long enough acquainted with him) that he will not hurt them, if they let him alone, any more than he will a cat or a dog, and when he meets one of these quadrupeds he calmly overlooks their existence; and if he is aware that he belongs to the latter species he entirely ignores the fact.

Yet when he is aroused he is terrible. Marygold has had an experience of this that she will never forget. It befell her while she was rambling one afternoon late in autumn through the extensive park surrounding her house at Gladwyn—one of Philadelphia's delightful suburbs—with Czar as her only escort. Intent upon gathering the brilliant-hued leaves that strewed the ground, she wandered further from the house than she had intended, and the red autumn sun dropped below the horizon, and the short afternoon closed in abruptly around her, ere she bethought herself that it was growing late, and she would have to hurry back to the house to be in time for dinner.

She had just looked at her watch to see what time it was, when a man stepped out of the woods border-

ing the path she was upon, and demanded the time-piece.

He was as ugly-looking a customer as one would care to meet when "the shades of night were falling," but Miss Dare—who was nothing if not daring—and, besides, she felt perfectly safe with Czar to protect her—calmly pocketed her watch and replied coolly:

"You ask too much, my friend. I will give you the time but not the timepiece—it is six o'clock," and so saying, she turned on her heel and had gotten a couple of yards from the man before he recovered from his astonishment that a chit of a girl would thus defy him; then with an oath he sprang after her and seized her roughly by the shoulders.

That was enough for Czar. All this time he had been a watchful observer of what passed, though unobserved by the man, owing to the fading light, and the fact that Czar stood in the shadow of the woods on the opposite side of the path, so that the ruffian did not see his peril until it was too late to escape it.

With one bound Czar cleared the path and was upon the wretch, who uttered a yell of terror that ended in a gurgling sound as the mastiff's great jaws closed upon his throat, and he was borne down to the

ground beneath the angry dog, and lay there writhing, his face growing rapidly purple, and his eyes starting from their sockets.

Horrified by the awful sight, Marygold called Czar off, but in these few moments he had almost choked the life out of his victim, and Marygold, looking down upon the unconscious figure, thought him already dead.

With her hand upon Czar's collar—for though he had just tasted blood he was as gentle as a lamb with her—to make sure of his following her, she ran all the way to the house, and on arriving there told what had occurred, and several of the men-servants hurried off to the scene of the tragedy. They found the man was not dead, though not far from it, and when the police were called in to take charge of him, they recognized him as a desperate character they were looking for, as he had committed many robberies in the neighborhood. They conjectured he was hiding on the heiress' grounds with the intention of robbing her house that very night, and seeing her in the course of her ramble, his eye was caught by her watch, it being a very valuable one, having her initials set in diamonds and other precious stones on the case,

and *not* seeing Czar, he thought to steal it while he had the chance. He undoubtedly would have succeeded, and might have hurt Marygold but for Czar. The mastiff became the hero of the hour, but a hero people preferred to worship from afar.

So much for Czar. Mrs. Castleton does not object to his presence at "The Castle," because she never objects to any of Marygold's "oddities;" what she thinks of them is another matter, and one Marygold does not concern herself about. She is indifferent to what people think of her so long as she does nothing to forfeit her own self-respect.

Leaving Czar to take care of himself (a duty he is fully capable of performing, and one in which no one is likely to interfere with him), Marygold enters the house with her aunt, whose arm encircles her waist, and they cross a marble-paved hall—at the other end of which is another door, being a more modern entrance to "The Castle" than that by the court, and reserved for formal callers, while the latter is used by the family and intimate friends—and ascend the grand stairway in this affectionate manner.

"I will come up to your rooms with you, Marygold," Mrs. Castleton says sweetly. "I have so much

to tell you, for I see you so seldom, that I must economize time and say it while you are dressing. I would feel very neglectful did I not comfort myself with the thought that it is solely your fault that we do not see more of each other."

"Certainly, solely my fault, Aunt Elinor," Marygold assents cheerfully, "you have nothing to accuse yourself of. How is Beatrice?"

"Very well, thank you—she is dressing; you know it always takes Beatrice an hour to make her toilet," says Beatrice's mamma, smiling. "When it is completed she will have a look at you—it will do her good."

"Am I such a tonic?" Marygold asks, laughing. "Tonics are generally distasteful."

"You are the elixir of life," Mrs. Castleton says sweetly. "Your life seems to agree with you," she adds, looking at the heiress admiringly.

"And you are the fountain of youth, Aunt Elinor," Marygold retorts, somewhat nettled. Compliments, instead of oiling the wheels of existence as they do with most people, generally produce friction when applied to her. "But what do you mean by my 'life?' You talk as if I were a north pole explorer!"

"Oh, dear no! not half so commonplace an individual," Mrs Castleton exclaims, laughing. "You must confess for a young girl like you to live by herself, and keep up the splendid establishment that you do, in these degenerate days, when fairy princesses no longer exist, is far more outlandish even than the life of a north pole explorer."

"But it is not my fault that I live by myself," Marygold contends, more for the sake of argument than because she cares whether her life is singular or not, "it is my misfortune. Other people have to do the same when they are so unfortunate as to be orphans."

"Marygold, what has come over you—are you in love?" Mrs. Castleton questions banteringly. "I never saw you so desirous to appear like other people. I see I must modify my expression, and instead of calling your life outlandish I will say it is only so far removed from the usual social order of things as the north pole is from us. There is *some* land there—explorers tell us."

Marygold does not mind this teasing—at least not as much as the compliments; the latter irritate, the former rather stimulates her.

CHAPTER II.

THEY now enter her apartments, the same she always occupies while at "The Castle," consisting of dressing-room, bedroom, and boudoir, arranged *en suite* (all of the lady guests at "The Castle" are similarly accommodated, so this is no particular favor to the heiress). The boudoir, the last in the suite, is a romantic chamber, being situated in an ivy-mantled tower that rises on the northeast corner of "The Castle," and here one can dream and dream, and fancy one's self a princess (if one be made that way—Marygold is not; she prefers to be what she is, an American girl, pure and simple), and sigh for a prince from over the sea, for from its narrow, diamond-paned casement windows one can see the sea, and hear what the wild waves are saying.

"And now for the secrets, Aunt Elinor!" Marygold exclaims, throwing aside her hat and gloves. (Nora is in the dressing-room unpacking the trunks that

Sambo has hoisted up on the elevator and rolled in.)
“You know you said you had so many things to tell me, and as you seem to want to say them when I am alone, I naturally conclude that they are secrets.”

“I have no secrets—what has an old woman like myself to do with secrets!” Mrs. Castleton answers, laughing. “They are a young girl’s possession. You may as well tell me yours, Marygold, else I will only think them worse than they are.”

“That is better than if they were worse than you think them,” is Marygold’s ready retort.

“Were all philosophers as charming we would excuse their philosophy,” Mrs. Castleton says sweetly. “Come, *ma chère*, show me your hand and I will tell you your fortune.”

Marygold knows her aunt always calls her *ma chère* when she is not feeling particularly affectionate toward her, so smiling a little mischievously, she walks over to where she has seated herself on the cushioned seat in the deep embrasure of one of the aforementioned casement windows, and demurely holds out her right hand.

“That will not tell me what I want to know,” Mrs. Castleton says, laughingly shaking her head.

"Nor will this," and Marygold extends her left hand.

Her aunt taps the ringless fingers with her fan.

"There's something wanting there!" she exclaims with real disappointment in her tone. She is a born matchmaker, and besides, has other reasons for being disappointed that the heiress is not engaged, for she is a formidable rival to her daughter Beatrice, who, though no inconsiderable heiress herself, cannot equal Marygold in that respect, and just now she has a duke among her guests, whom it is her highest ambition to marry to Beatrice, and knowing the attractions heiresses have for dukes, she trembles to think what may be the result of his meeting Marygold. "Ah! *ma chère*," she continues in an admonitory tone, "a woman's hand is incomplete without an engagement ring."

"Really? Then mine will be incomplete all my life," Marygold says cheerfully. "I never intend to marry."

"What a terrible threat!" Mrs. Castleton exclaims, laughing. "But mankind need not despair! You think you will never marry now, perhaps, but there will come a time when you will want peace, which you will never have so long as your hand can be sought by

prince and beggar—the prince lured by the sparkle of your beauty, and the beggar by—er—well—something else, so in sheer fatigue of saying no, you will say yes.”

“But seriously, Aunt Elinor, there is no way out of the difficulty,” Marygold says, laughing in spite of herself. “I will never give my hand to a man who has designs upon my pocketbook, and by what magician’s skill will I ever be able to divine whether my suitor is attracted by my beauty, as you kindly put it, or—something else? I think even the affections of the prince, were they analyzed, would be found to contain a good deal of dross. I don’t know but what I would have more pity on the beggar, for he, at least, would be a more deserving object of charity.”

“True—but the prince, I think, would be a more agreeable one, and—eureka! I have found him. Marygold, I have a husband for you.”

“Thank you! if I had accepted all the husbands you have found for me, Aunt Elinor, I would have had a dozen by this time. Do you remember last August when you made the same announcement? Poor me! I am here, but the husband is wanting.”

“And do *you* remember last August,” Mrs. Castle-

ton says impressively, "Archie Marvin committed suicide?"

"Oh! Aunt Elinor, everybody said his was a case of accidental drowning," Marygold cries, growing ashen white, while her head swims. But she conquers this weakness with an impulse of scorn, for her conscience tells her she had nothing to do with Archie Marvin's death. "And if it had not been an accident, it would not have been the loss of me that drove him to self-destruction," she continues, with some heat, "but the loss of my money with which he hoped to pay his debts—you know he was sinking in a sea of them, and he thought *I* would be his life preserver! I never encouraged him, I treated him with positive rudeness, for I saw though the real reason of his attentions from the beginning. You encouraged him—I believe you thought it would be fun just to see the poor fellow rejected, for you must have known I would not accept him."

"How should I—you are so odd I never know how to take you," Mrs. Castleton says, pulling a long face. "I thought you might be won through pity, and I had no compunctions on your account, for your income would support a dozen insolvents, and Archie was

such a pretty boy, and one of our best families. But peace be to his ashes! I have now something better for you. The Duke of St. Bride is my guest—I do not think you need have any fears of his having designs upon your pocketbook. He has caused the greatest flutter in the matrimonial market of London—which has fallen below par since his cruise to the United States—and the excitement has spread to us. His duchy of St. Bride, down in Surrey, is still without a duchess—here is a chance for you to ascend the vacant throne, *ma chère*.”

“I positively decline the honor,” Marygold cries scornfully.

Her aunt’s words irritate her exceedingly. “Why does she harp on the subject of my marriage when she knows it is the one I least concern myself about?” she says to herself angrily. “She has no doubt heralded my approach to this duke by an exact account of the amount of my fortune, and I will be pestered with his attentions, for he has doubtless already sized me up as one of those American heiresses who think the best use to which they can put their millions is to buy a title. But he shall soon learn his mistake!” Aloud she continues: “There is even

less likelihood of my marrying this duke, should he be *kind* enough to ask me, than there was of my marrying Archie Marvin. You will see the announcement of my death before you see the announcement of my marriage that could be headed 'Another English Title bought by American Gold!' Beatrice may have his grace—if, indeed, he is not hers already! I remember a title is the sort of thing that she has great affection for." The thought here occurs to her that it is strange that her aunt should have her interests at heart more than her own daughter's—this is just the match for Beatrice her ambition would delight in. It does *not* occur to her that this may be the very reason she proposes it to her, knowing she is taking the very surest way to make the duke more odious to her than he would otherwise be, being a duke, for Marygold will never allow any one to manage her affairs, especially in a matchmaking way.

"Ah! but Beatrice knows there will be no chance for her when you enter the field," her aunt says, smiling. "There will be such a halo of gold dust about your lovely head that the knight will worship you on his knees, and if your head is not turned by the adoration of such a handsome adorer, it will be

stronger than either Bee's or mine. I protest we are both in love with him."

"Then you may be sure he will seek no further for a shrine whereat to offer up the incense of his affections," Marygold observes a trifle scornfully, while her mental conclusion is that this duke must be a very great simpleton, indeed—in her humble estimation there are few of his kind who are not—for her aunt and cousin to find so much to admire in him. "If Beatrice will not have him, Aunt Elinor, why not marry him yourself?"

Mrs. Castleton is a widow of three years' standing, and it is certainly no one's fault but her own that she has not married again.

"What! would you give him an old woman!" she exclaims, lifting her white hands, sparkling with costly rings, in affected horror. "*Ma chère*, he is only a boy—he is twenty-five—I am afraid he would not be very grateful. But I must take myself off"—rising with a pretty yawn—"or your toilet will never be completed. And I have had my say—the duke was the weightiest subject on my mind, but there are several others that I threw in for balance. Your old friend, Murray Stuyvesant, is here, and the Messrs,

Smytherston-Smythers, Fitz-Gerald, and always your cousin, Bertram Castleton. The ladies in the party I know will not interest you, so I will not detain you by enumerating them." (This is said a little maliciously, for while it has some truth in it, inasmuch as the ladies she meets at "The Castle," really do not interest Marygold, it is not because she is only interested in the gentlemen, as Mrs. Castleton wishes to imply.) "I hope, upon reflection," she pursues sweetly, "you will feel more charitably disposed toward his grace. Ah! you will be in pink—the spell is at work—that is the duke's favorite color. *Au revoir!* I will send Beatrice to you." And so saying she departs, leaving Marygold ruminating over her last words.

Her first thought is to choose another gown, but pink is her color, too, and because this sprig of nobility happens to fancy it, will she alter her taste? That would be ridiculous!

Beatrice comes in as Nora's deft fingers are putting the finishing touches to her mistress' toilet.

Beatrice is a clear-cut beauty, "icily regular, splendidly null." She does not gush up to Marygold—Beatrice never gushes, it does not become her languid

style—but she kisses her dutifully. There is not much love lost between them, a fact both recognize and neither deplore, so they get along excellently together. There are no strained relations between them—they feel they can quarrel whenever they choose, and the knowledge takes all fight out of them.

Beatrice links her arm through Marygold's and strikes an attitude before the long mirror—a look in the glass is a pleasure she never denies herself.

“We will enter the drawing-room so, where every one is assembled by this time—let us see the effect,” she says, regarding their images critically. “We are ‘two daughters of one race.’ I think we do the family credit, *n'est ce pas ?*”

Beatrice Castleton is very handsome. Like her mother, she is tall and slender, but there the likeness ends—you could imagine Beatrice melting away if she were suddenly invested with her mother's vitality, and yet that lady has not half as much as Marygold; as she and Beatrice stand together they look about as congenial as snow and sunshine.

Beatrice's complexion is pale but very clear, the blue veins showing at the temples. She is the fortunate possessor of a purely Greek nose, but her

mouth is too thin lipped for beauty, though you forget this when she smiles, for her teeth are very even and dazzlingly white. Her eyebrows are black and penciled and her eyelashes long, enhancing the expression of her eyes, which are very beautiful. They are large and deep blue, and seem to contain all the warmth there is in her, though they are slumberous fires. Her hair is blue-black and very silky and luxuriant, and she arranges it like that of the Venus de Milo—this being the one instance in which she sacrifices her conventionality upon the altar of her vanity—whose sculptured profile hers strongly resembles. So it is not cut in a fringe, but now and then a stray tress will escape and lie upon her white brow as though it were trespassing on forbidden ground. This night her gown is buff (Beatrice has a *penchant* for buff), a long, trailing creation of Worth's displaying her superb neck and arms. Her only ornaments are Gloire de Dijon roses, whose yellow tints harmonize exquisitely with her gown.

Alongside of this cold, statuesque beauty, Marygold looks like a little heathen.

There is a heathenish fire in her brown hair, and a reflected glow 'neath her white skin that seems to

seek outlet in her red lips. Her teeth are as white as Beatrice's, but not so "icily regular;" her eyebrows and lashes are many shades darker than her hair, and if Beatrice's blue eyes are slumberous fires her brown ones burn with a brilliancy that makes them dangerous—though no doubt Beatrice's have done as much mischief. Her coiffure is high, with one or two captivating little curls of her gold-brown hair above her straight black brows. She does all she can to increase her height, which is *not* considerable; but what with the erect vigor of her carriage and her high heels and coiffure, she presents a more striking appearance than tall, languid Beatrice. Beatrice looks as if she merely suffered existence; Marygold, as if she got the most extravagant enjoyment out of life.

So much for these "two daughters of one race."

"We set each other off nicely," Beatrice remarks, smiling, with a last satisfied glance at her lovely, cool reflection—vanity is her pardonable sin. "The people downstairs should appreciate me to-night more than ever, and you—I don't believe you fully comprehend the advantage you have in being seen for the first time with me. I look more *spirituelle*, and you more of the earth, earthy."

"You might personate snow and I sunshine—take care I don't make it too hot for you," Marygold retorts, laughing.

They have the pleasantest way of saying the most unpleasant things to each other, at which they never appear to take offense. Their very free and independent relation seems to warrant this agreeable way of sharpening their wits.

Evidently the Duke of St. Bride does not interest Beatrice as much as he does her mamma, for she says not a word about him, "Unless," thinks Marygold, "I am to infer from her silence that he is all the more to her on the principle that we talk least of what we think most. What am I to think? I shall not think about it at all—the subject is not worth a thought."

CHAPTER III.

THE first person Marygold beholds on entering the drawing-room is Bertram Castleton, who hangs about the door looking the picture of expectation. Bertram is just twenty-one—a point he is very sensitive upon, for he would have Marygold believe him several years her senior, instead of which he is her junior by a year. And his sister is yet more sensitive upon the subject, for it is a well-known fact that he is the junior member of the Castleton family, hence to have him boldly avow himself twenty-four is, to say the least of it, provoking, and often arouses a degree of heat in the cool Beatrice that an observer would have thought her incapable of showing.

Bertram is a second edition of his mamma, minus the petticoats, and would be very handsome did he not somehow impress one with the idea that he would be handsomer plus the petticoats instead of the habiliments fate has decreed that he shall wear, and

which he wears with a degree of perfection that amounts to an art—Bertram's vanity runs to clothes. Poor Bertram! but he is at least harmless, and as he chooses to consider himself in love with Marygold, she encourages him in his folly by the most heartless persecution.

"What are you looking for, Bertie?" she asks artlessly, as she extends him her little finger to shake in passing.

"If your heart does not tell you, it is only because, as I have often said before, you have none," he answers solemnly.

"How could I have one—when I have lost it to you," she retorts, with a ravishing glance over her shoulder.

About a dozen people are standing about the room, and Marygold's entrance occasions a visible awakening of interest. This is always the case when a new element is dropped into a house party—especially if the element has anything golden about it. Mrs. Castleton has doubtless informed those of her guests who were not already aware of the fact that such is the case, and they are prepared to look upon the heiress with an eye to business. She has become so used to this sort of thing, and knows to her sorrow how little

disinterestedness there is in the world, that she has grown quite cynical.

Mrs. Castleton is conversing with the Duke of St. Bride, it is easy to tell from the charming little air of deference she affects toward him, though he looks like hardly more than the boy she called him. That they are talking about her is evident to Marygold, for their eyes are fixed upon her as she moves up the room with Beatrice, nodding here and there to the people she recognizes, Bertram following in her wake.

Her aunt comes forward to meet her, the duke a step behind her.

"I have had the advantage of you all, good people, in having already seen my niece," she says, smiling. "But because of that, Marygold, you must not deprive me of the pleasure of another kiss. I am sure, *ma chère*, you ought to consider us very charitable that we do not look savagely upon you," she continues playfully, "for you have kept us fully fifteen minutes from the dining-room. I will leave it to the duke to punish you. Marygold, let me introduce to you the Duke of St. Bride. Your grace, my niece, Miss Dare—will you take her out to dinner?"

Marygold bows a little haughtily in acknowledg-

ment of this honor, and glancing up quickly to see what this sprig of nobility is like upon closer inspection, she finds herself looking into a very handsome pair of eyes; indeed, it seems to her, they are the very pleasantest she has ever seen, and so friendly that she feels an almost irresistible impulse to throw away her ridiculous *hauteur* and be friends, as she knows they would be in a moment if she chose. But she suddenly meets Mrs. Castleton's eyes, as she smiles back at her on her way to the dining-room, and there is a mocking look in their cool depths that seems to Marygold to read her through and through, and ask, "Is he not all I told you he was—and more, too?"

She places her hand a little disdainfully on the unoffending arm of the Englishman, and they follow her aunt out to dinner.

"I am afraid I will be guilty of disobeying Mrs. Castleton's parting command," the duke says in a frank, pleasant voice, and with a smile that Marygold can tell very well might be captivating, as they take the places at the table assigned to them—he the seat of honor next to Mrs. Castleton, and she that on his right hand. "I would not have the heart to punish you even if I could see the way."

"And you are all in the dark? I do not see myself what *you* could do that would punish *me*," Marygold says quickly. "Besides, Aunt Elinor has punished me enough."

He looks hard at her for a moment, as though trying to comprehend the meaning of her words.

"You mean when she inflicted my company upon you," he says at length, with an assumption of good-humored indifference—for Marygold can tell it is assumed by an under-quiver of wounded vanity—or something. "Yes, it is rather hard on you, when, I suppose, you wanted to talk to your cousin. He looks put out, too."

She is ashamed of her rudeness and hastens to retrieve it.

"Who, Bertie?" glancing down the table to where her unhappy relative sits scowling between two insipid bread-and-butter misses, no doubt invited for Master Bertram's especial benefit, for both Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice wish to believe Bertram is still a little boy, much to that young gentleman's disgust. "Oh, dear no! I am glad enough she has relieved me of him. He is a dear fellow, but he bores one to death with his nonsense."

St. Bride laughs heartily.

"But what is nonsense to you may be dead earnest to him—you are awfully hard on the 'dear fellow,' don't you think?" he asks, his handsome eyes smiling at her in a way that compels hers unwillingly to meet them. "You should have heard him ringing your praises for the past week, notwithstanding we teased him mercilessly. Every time he opened his lips there would drop from them such pearls and diamonds as, 'Ah, but you should see Marygold—Wait till Marygold comes and then you will see a girl worth looking at.'"

Marygold is blushing furiously with annoyance.

"Why couldn't he keep such a worthless thing as his opinion to himself, until it was asked for," she snaps ungratefully. St. Bride stares.

"Why, don't you like nice things said of you when you are not by to hear them—a proof that they are not mere empty compliments?" he asks in unfeigned surprise. "I thought it was only the nasty things that are said about us behind our backs, that didn't agree with us. But perhaps you like people to be as hard on you as you are on them."

This is too much.

"Whatever I like I don't like rudeness," Marygold retorts, turning a face quivering between scorn and anger upon him. And then without waiting for him to defend himself from this charge, she turns her back as nearly as possible to him, and brings her face, smoothed into the most enchanting smiles, to bear upon her right-hand neighbor—in whom she is a little taken aback to find her "old friend" Murray Stuyvesant, who certainly has a right to the title Mrs. Castleton gave him.

She met him long ago, when she was but a girl of sixteen. He had gone out to visit her father in San Francisco, of which city Mr. Dare was one of the richest and most influential bankers, and where the father and daughter lived alone—Mrs. Dare having died when Marygold was a baby—in a house of palatial magnificence. Stuyvesant was the head of the New York branch of the banking house of Dare Co. There was a fragment of romance about that visit. Though twenty years her senior, he fell in love with Marygold, and Mr. Dare, who had a great esteem and friendship for him, and who was failing in health, eager to see his daughter in the hands of some one who would know how to take care of her and her

great wealth as well, before anything happened, encouraged him to propose. Ah, well! to make a long story, and a rather painful one for Stuyvesant, short—he did, much to Marygold's consternation, for she had always thought him as old as his father, and much uglier, so she told him decidedly that she could never, *never* marry him, and though he was very much upset at first, afterward he and her father were as good friends as ever—though Marygold avoided him as though he had the plague.

It was he who prevailed upon Mr. Dare to come East, thinking the change of climate might benefit him, and settle in New York. But Marygold, who seemed to have conceived a sudden and desperate dislike for that city—whether because Stuyvesant proposed it as a dwelling-place, history deponeth not—positively declared she would not live in it, and so her father, who humored her in everything that could do her no harm, and not knowing but harm might come to her in the same city with Mrs. Castleton (for whom Mr. Dare, though she was his dead wife's sister, had an unconquerable antipathy), erected a palatial residence in Philadelphia and settled Marygold in it with a relative, a Mrs. Courtland, to

relieve her of all the responsibilities of housekeeping. None too soon! Six months after this new life began Marygold was an orphan.

By her father's will, Murray Stuyvesant became her guardian and the sole administrator of her immense fortune until she should come of age—an arduous undertaking, but one he undertook willingly for the sake of both the living and the dead. Marygold, for her part, wished he had been less willing about it, and the thought of their relative position as guardian and ward was galling to her pride, remembering as she did with all the tingling consciousness of a sensitive nature the designs he had had upon her liberty—which was the way she looked upon his proposal to her. And any advice from him, or effort to control her actions, was regarded by her with suspicion, and all the powers of her mind were directed to the circumvention of the designs upon her liberty she believed him guilty of still entertaining, and it was only with the dawning of her eighteenth birthday that she breathed freely, and felt she could relax the vigilant watch she had kept upon the movements of the enemy lest he should take her by surprise. And even since the attainment of her majority, as Stuyvesant still has

the management of her financial affairs, according to her father's will, and feels himself called upon to advise her, and reads her long lectures when she does not follow his advice, a bitter warfare is constantly waged between them. Mrs. Castleton, perceiving their hostile relations, and taking an unchristianlike delight in witnessing their passages at arms, always invites Stuyvesant to "The Castle" while Marygold is there, no doubt *kindly* concluding it will make their visits more exciting for them as well as for herself—as it certainly does, if not more enjoyable.

For some reason, Marygold has never been so little pleased to see her "old friend" as on this visit. He is far from being a handsome man, and she is more impressed with this fact than ever before on turning from the Duke of St. Bride's handsome, ingenuous countenance, to his cynical, care-lined visage, that she and her troublesome affairs have doubtless done their share to mark. Sometimes the thought that she has spoiled—no, she sincerely hopes not that, but shadowed Stuyvesant's life—fills her with compunction for the way she treats him; but this compunction only has the effect of making her quarrel the more with him, lest he mistake the cause of it and think it means that

she is relenting toward him, and be tempted to try his luck again.

This evening Stuyvesant is in a particularly cynical frame of mind, for Marygold has been so occupied with her new acquaintance (certainly not through interest but merely to show him that she has not the veneration for a duke that some others may have!) that she has entirely overlooked him, a slight he naturally resents as an "old friend," and as Marygold is always willing to meet him more than halfway in hostilities, they are soon engaged in their favorite pastime.

Stuyvesant begins it by asking in a sarcastic tone of voice that considerably nettles Marygold:

"How do you like your new friend?"

She knows very well to whom he refers, but she looks blankly around the table.

"Whom do you mean? I was not aware that I made friends with any one whom I had not seen for more than a quarter of an hour," she says haughtily.

He seems pleased with this answer.

"I thought you might be as anxious as other people to admit a duke into your friendship and would not wait to see if he deserved the honor," he answers in

his cynical way. "I am glad to find your head is too well balanced to be turned by that pretty boy, who it is not surprising is what he is, when all your sex have done their best to spoil him."

"Are you referring to the Duke of St. Bride? *What* is he? I think he is very agreeable. What has he done to make you his enemy?" Marygold asks coolly—with unblushing inconsistency defending the man she snubbed but a moment ago. Is it simply for the sake of disagreeing with Stuyvesant, or for some other reason? Who can tell?

The subject of their altercation has not heard them. After his rebuff from Marygold he turned to Mrs. Castleton, and is talking to her in the frank, pleasant way he attempted with Marygold, but that she nipped in the bud by her rudeness. She has not heard him speak to Beatrice yet, and unconsciously she falls to wondering what tone he will use toward her. So engrossed is she with these thoughts that she does not hear what Stuyvesant is saying to her.

"You are not listening to me," he exclaims at length irritably.

"Am I not? Pardon me, or rather my thoughts, for they are to blame—I was thinking of something

else," she says, with a provoking shrug of her shoulders.

"The Duke of St. Bride is a fortunate man if he can already make you quarrel with an old friend," Stuyvesant says in a low tone, regarding her fixedly

"I should think you would know by this time that it does not take much to do that," Marygold thinks to herself, but she does not say it aloud. For once she is willing to conciliate him.

"Ah! but it takes two to make a quarrel," she murmurs pathetically, and with a sidelong glance that immediately puts him in a good humor. Had she not given him this *douceur* he would be jealous enough to imagine her in love with a man she had not exchanged more than a dozen sentences with, and who all this time has forgotten her existence—a new experience!

She wonders if it is for Mrs. Castleton's sake alone that he is so eager to please her, or is it for her daughter's? Involuntarily she glances at Beatrice, who is seated opposite to them, and across a miniature pond of water-lilies and through some drooping fern-fronds, she beholds a pale, lovely face, that has never seemed so beautiful to her before. It is bent down,

apparently in deep attention to what a man beside her—a Mr. Gerald Fitz-Gerald, whose eyes tell the tale that he is yet another victim to her charms—is saying, but Marygold wonders if she is unaware how well this pose becomes her, showing the classic outline of her head and neck, and the sweep of her long eyelashes, and if she thinks her *vis à vis*, the Duke of St. Bride, is blind to it. She glances up, perhaps to see, and then her eyelids droop again, while the faintest pink steals into her creamy cheeks. Has she met his glance? Then what has she seen there? Unbounded admiration, *sans doute!*

And then Marygold feels his eyes turn to her—to compare them, perhaps!—and involuntarily her eyebrows arch a little disdainfully and her lips take on a slightly scornful curve.

At this moment Mrs. Castleton speaks to the duke and Marygold hears her say:

“You are making poor use of your time, my dear duke, in letting Mr. Stuyvesant so monopolize my niece. I have given you a *golden* opportunity to make friends with her—then why this neglect?”

The blood rushes into Marygold’s face, and interrupting Stuyvesant in the midst of some cynical

remarks upon titled men in general and dukes in particular, she turns sharply upon her aunt and exclaims haughtily:

“Please allow me the privilege of choosing my own friends, Aunt Elinor!”

St. Bride flushes deeply and looks down at his plate, while Mrs. Castleton’s blue eyes open very wide.

“Certainly, *ma chère*,” she says in her very sweetest tones. “Only allow me to say that you could make no better choice than his grace.”

Marygold is relieved from answering by “his grace” himself, who says quickly:

“Thanks awfully much for your recommendation, Mrs. Castleton, but I hope some day Miss Dare will let me be her friend on my own.”

Miss Dare likes this retort so much that it would disarm all her hostility, did not Mrs. Castleton, who does not like it, say in her most insinuating way:

“Ah! then you will not have lost this golden opportunity.”

St. Bride looks mystified; Mrs. Castleton laughs low in exquisite enjoyment of her wit; and Marygold sits silent, trying to choke down her wrath, which is so intense she cannot trust herself to speak. And

Stuyvesant adds to it by whispering sarcastically in her ear:

"Your aunt's wit seems to run in a golden vein. Perhaps 'his grace' has been questioning her concerning some of our gold mines with an eye to possessing one before he returns to England."

"Perhaps he has," Marygold says with an effort, almost choked with anger and conflicting emotions; "but I would not emulate him if I were you; I do not think there is the least likelihood of either of you attaining your desire."

Stuyvesant looks hard at her for a moment and she feels her color deepening.

"I do not think there is the least likelihood of the duke's *not* attaining it," he says with a smile. "As to my emulating him—do you take me for a fool that you think I would attempt competition with a duke? He can win anything he has a mind to—at least, he thinks so."

"Does he? But perhaps he will find out some day that he is mistaken," Marygold says in a voice that is hardly audible.


What has come over them? Hitherto, the heiress' visits to "The Castle" have been what visits to such an

establishment, and to such a social whirlpool as Blue-point—where there are so many beautiful sirens to lure men on to the rocks of matrimony—generally are; and Marygold has been drawn into the vortex, and has come out of it at the end of each visit a little more tired, a little more nauseated, perhaps, than on the visit before—but nothing more. Yet this visit already gives promise of an element of comedy—or tragedy; which? That will be according to the *dénouement*. And all because a duke has appeared upon the scene—absurd!

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKFAST is served from eight to ten at "The Castle," this hotel style being necessary in an establishment that does so much entertaining. The guests straggle down to the breakfast-room at any time between those hours that best suits their convenience. The meal is not served from one long table, but from charming little ones set at intervals around the apartment so that one can choose one's own companions at the repast—a very pretty idea. The breakfast-room is the pleasantest in the house. It is situated on the south side, and its windows look out on a *parterre* gay with flowers, and from the wide seats in their deep embrasures one can enjoy the prospect to the utmost.

And on the morning after the night of Marygold's arrival, the prospect within is hardly less inviting, there are so many pretty women and yet prettier gowns, while the men on the whole are very good-looking specimens of their kind.



What though with many beauty is only skin deep, if faces are but masks to all sorts of moral irregularities and ugliness, there are very few keen enough to detect this, and it makes people far more agreeable to look at than if their faults, their meanness, their pettiness, their *sins*, were stamped upon their countenances. It makes the world a much prettier place to go through, if not a safer.

But a truce to this moralizing! Certainly the people who go to make up the party at "The Castle" are agreeable enough to look at, and as to their sins—but who shall confess them? First, *par excellence* among Mrs. Castleton's guests is Mrs. Castleton herself, as youthful as any of them in appearance, and handsomer than most. To see her gracefully flirting with Cholmondeley Smytherston-Smythers Chappie, as Bertram disrespectfully calls him—a callow youth seated at her table, having tow-colored hair and eyelashes, and who talks with a lisp and wears abnormally high collars, and a glass in one pale orb (which does not seem to enable him to see any one's charms but those of his hostess) because it's English, "doncher know," in which cause he would suffer martyrdom cheerfully—and verily to wear three-inch collars, and a monocle

made suit makes you think she has got hold of one of her brother's by mistake, and the wardrobe of Fitz-Gerald *frère* has, without doubt, furnished her shirt, collar, cuffs and tie; her skirt is the only thing that betrays she is a woman—deplorable fact! In a certain article of her brother's attire that shall be nameless (she appears in inexpressibles that are a pretty near approach to them whenever she rides her "wheel") and a cigarette between her lips—which, by the way, is not infrequently seen there—she would make a better representative of the Fitz-Gerald family than the representative himself.

She has attached herself to Mrs. Castleton, for "Chappie" Smytherston-Smythers, being the least manly masculine member of the party, has won her admiration, and she has set her heart upon conquering him.

At another table is another interesting *tête-à-tête* between Fitz-Gerald *frère* and Beatrice's "dearest friend," Rosalie Ralston, though Fitz-Gerald does not seem very much interested in it, for his glance wanders constantly to Beatrice as if he were more anxious to hear what she and the duke are whispering about than what his lively companion is saying. Miss Ral-

ston for her part tries her best to chain his attention, and vows to herself to exert every wile in the art of *coquetterie*—in which she is an adept—to make him transfer his affections to her before their joint visit to “The Castle” is over, both to revenge herself upon him for his indifference this morning, and to spite her “dearest friend,” Beatrice. It is always “my darling Bee,” and “my sweetest Rose,” between her and Beatrice, for they are fond of indulging in little outbursts of affection, more for the sake of a pretty pose than anything else, for that they do not waste much love on each other is evinced by the fact that Beatrice has about the most unflattering opinion of her “sweetest Rose” of any one acquainted with Miss Ralston, who in turn is as jealous of her “darling Bee,” as if she were her worst enemy.

“The bee has a sting and the rose has thorns; beware both of them!” Bertram once remarked facetiously to Marygold; but experience has taught her that Beatrice and Rosalie Ralston are no exception to the rule of “dearest friends.” She can make friends with none of them. She might as well be on Robinson Crusoe’s island for all the congeniality she finds in them.

All the others having thus established themselves at the different tables according to their respective tastes—with the exception of the luckless Bertram and the unhappy Fitz-Gerald—Marygold and Murray Stuyvesant are left to make the most of each other's society at a table all to themselves; which he does by sociably burying himself in a morning paper, and she by an assiduous attention to her breakfast, for both knowing they cannot exchange a dozen words without quarreling, they have the self-denial to forbear rather than afford their audience the amusement they undoubtedly would by so doing.

Meanwhile the ball of conversation is banded from mouth to mouth between the occupants of the other tables, and whenever it happens to shy off toward the heiress and Stuyvesant, as no efforts can arouse them from their taciturnity, it would fall to the ground did not Mrs. Castleton send it rolling on again with renewed impetus by some clever remark at their expense. And no one joins louder in the laugh against them than Bertram, who, being far from comfortable himself, is glad to have some one in the same boat with him, and thinks by calling attention to their unconquerable taciturnity to distract it from the plain

and humiliating fact that the fair Sibyl and Sylvia have entrapped him; and he also has thought of a clever move by which he hopes to free himself from their snares.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” he at length exclaims, rapping upon the table with a spoon as though it were a gavel, to call attention to himself. “I propose we impose a fine upon those folks who don’t do their share toward making conversation. Marygold will be the heaviest loser, for she hasn’t opened her lips this morning. Which is to blame, coz, the conversation, or”—with an impudent wink at Stuyvesant, that is lost upon that gentleman, thanks to his newspaper—“the company? Mr. Stuyvesant, don’t you want to change seats with me so as to free yourself from all implication in the last grave charge?” concludes the artful Bertram.

Stuyvesant does not like to be drawn into notoriety under any circumstances however favorable, and certainly not under such *un*favorable ones as these, therefore the look he gives Bertram over his paper would turn to stone a youth less stony than he, but *he* only goes off in a fit of laughter that seems as if it would never stop; and though Marygold is not at all

obliged to him for the notoriety he has drawn her into, as well as Stuyvesant, she cannot help but laugh also, Stuyvesant looks so much more grim and tragic than she thinks the occasion warrants.

Her laugh is like fuel to his ire; he rises stiffly from his chair.

"I resign my seat to you with pleasure, since Miss Dare is also desirous of the change," he says, bowing to Bertram with sardonic politeness; "but only on condition that you do not ask me to fill yours. It would be impossible for me to do so with the grace that you have, and you cannot expect me to wish to place myself in a position where comparisons could be drawn between us that would be so disadvantageous to me." And so saying he stalks from the room, leaving Bertram to recover from the irony of his remarks—if he can.

A general laugh follows his exit, though it is difficult to tell whom the joke is most against—Stuyvesant himself, Bertram, or Marygold. Bertram, for his part, enjoys it hugely, for it has gained him his object. When Stuyvesant rose from his chair he left his place between the Misses Smytherston-Smythers with alacrity, *malgré* their looks of reproach, and he

does not consider himself obliged to throw up his part of the contract because Stuyvesant does not fulfill his, but instead sinks into that gentleman's vacated seat with a sigh of immense satisfaction.

But this satisfaction is of short duration, for his society is not agreeable enough to Marygold to make amends for the undesired attention he has called upon her, and though she was delighted with Stuyvesant's discomfiture, she is not so much delighted when she begins to feel a little bit discomfited herself. She rises from the table almost immediately after Bertram seats himself at it.

"I will leave you to finish Mr. Stuyvesant's breakfast for him," she remarks ironically, as she sweeps from the room, taking care to do so by another door than that through which Stuyvesant made his exit.

Its informality is the chief charm of the breakfast at "The Castle." Being served from individual tables, the guests do not have to wait for the rising of their hostess, but can leave the room whenever it suits their convenience.

Marygold does not wish to see Stuyvesant, for his temper being far from good, and having just been sorely tried, she does not care to be treated to a dis-

play of it, as she knows she would be for the share she has had in working his discomfiture. So before venturing into the courtyard in quest of Czar—who is generally to be found there, for he loves to doze on its cool pavement, and she thinks she will work off her annoyance by a walk with him—she gives a cautious look out into it to see if the coast is clear, for Stuyvesant, as well as Czar, appreciates the shadowy coolness that always prevails in it no matter how warm the day may be, and enjoys sitting in the colonnade that surrounds it. Sure enough, there he is calmly reading the paper as if nothing had occurred to ruffle him. But though this calmness may pass with the others if they happen to see him—he is a politic man and does not wish them to think that Bertram has driven him from the breakfast-room, but that he has left it solely to suit his own convenience, and find a quiet place where his reading will not be disturbed by their conversation—it does not deceive Marygold, for she knows it is not intended to, as he would pretty soon convince her were she to give him the chance. So seeing Czar is not in the court anyway, she turns to flee in another direction—and finds Bertram standing behind her, looking the picture of contrition.

"Have you forgiven me, Marygold? Say you have forgiven me, or I will go down on my knees and stay there until you do," he pleads in his most wheedling tone. "You know Stuyvesant had finished his breakfast. I'll bet you a five-pound box of chocolates he wouldn't have been so obliging as to leave because I asked him to, if he hadn't wanted to go somewhere where he could read his paper in peace. By Jove! I'm right," he exclaims, lowering his voice as he catches sight of Stuyvesant through the door from which Marygold reconnoitered the position of the enemy. "There he is now, dead to us all, with the paper for his winding sheet. What an odd old chap it is!"

Marygold cannot keep her lips from relaxing into a smile at this, which sign of relenting Bertram no sooner sees than he clasps his hands and cries ecstatically: "See! see! the sun shines again!"

Whereupon Marygold laughs outright. Bertram has won the day; it is beneath one's dignity to be angry with him; he is too ridiculous to inspire anything but mirth.

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Dinner is over and the ladies saunter out to the

terrace in quest of a sea-breeze, for the night is very warm; and the gentlemen soon follow them, with the exception of Stuyvesant, who has the poor taste to prefer his cigar to their society and goes off by himself to smoke it.

Presently Czar, who has kept himself hidden somewhere all day, for he is no more partial to the society at "The Castle" than his mistress, comes stalking around from the region of the kitchen where he has been having his dinner, waited upon by Nora, who always gives him his meals, for she judges—and wisely!—that it has much to do with his friendship for her, which she is naturally anxious to cement; and attracted by the sound of his mistress' voice gravely approaches the group upon the terrace, his huge body looming up in gigantic proportions in the uncertain light.

Several of the girls who have not yet made his acquaintance give voice to little screams of terror, and quickly change their pretty attitudes for positions of safety. Bertram, who has not yet learned to look upon Czar with indifferent eyes, retreats precipitately behind Marygold; "Chappie" Smytherston-Smythers exclaiming, "Oh! ah! what a big dorg!" takes sev-

eral steps back from him, perhaps to get a better view, on the principle that distance lends enchantment; while Beatrice's victim looks undecided whether to stay and defend her, or flee and save himself. The Duke of St. Bride alone stands his ground with perfect composure.

"My word, he is a gallant dog!" he exclaims. "Give me your paw, old man, and let you and me be friends."

And Czar—what does he say to this offer of amity? Marygold is amazed. Slowly he raises his great foreleg and solemnly places it in the duke's outstretched hand. Never before has Czar stooped to this condescension to any one but his mistress—truth to tell, no one else has ever before asked him to! Marygold is obliged to conclude there must be *some* good qualities in the Englishman, for the dog's keen instinct has never misled him.

All those who know Czar's traits are surprised at this scene, while those who have seen the huge mastiff for the first time wonder at the duke's temerity. He alone is unconscious of any cause for either surprise or wonder, but pats Czar's fine head with a friendly hand,

"To whom does he belong?" he asks. "How I would love to own such a dog!"

"Ask my niece," Mrs. Castleton speaks up before Marygold can answer, smiling in her most insinuating way. "I know she values Czar so highly that she would not part with him for any amount of money—and you could hardly expect her to, you know, when you consider that she has already more than she knows what to do with!—but if you were to give her something in return that she could value equally high, you might bring her to terms."

All the anger that was kindled in Marygold during the discord of that wretched hour at dinner last night, that has been smoldering in her all day, flares up again with redoubled fury at this. Why? Because there is a double meaning in Mrs. Castleton's sweetly uttered words—as there was in everything she said last night—that is too plain to escape the dullest understanding, and that touches Marygold where her pride and sensitiveness are most vulnerable. St. Bride alone seems not to understand it, perhaps because Englishmen are proverbially slow at understanding humor, or perhaps because he is determined not to understand it.

"Is he your dog, Miss Dare? How proud you must

be of him!" he exclaims frankly—is it only politeness that makes him turn to Czar with added interest, or does he really feel it? "Czar! how his name fits him—he is truly a king among his kind. What a prime escort he must make for you—as good as a regiment of men!"

Is there anything in these words to call forth a rude rejoinder? Hardly, but the evil spell of Mrs. Castleton's words is upon Marygold and it is responsible for her answer.

"Yes, he is the only escort I want," she says coldly. "Come, Czar! we will go down to the sea. We have not said, 'how do you do' to our old friend yet." And she runs down the steps of the terrace.

She is furious that Czar does not follow her immediately, but lingers as if loath to leave his new friend, or, worse still, beg him to come too.

"Czar, Czar, come here, sir!" she calls imperiously, with a stamp of her foot.

And Czar reluctantly obeys, casting a last entreating glance behind him.

Of course the duke does not succumb to this entreaty, after Marygold's polite way of letting him know she wanted no company; but Bertram, who is

too delightfully stupid to understand such little speeches, or too delightfully vain to take them to himself, springs down the steps of the terrace after her.

"You might ask a fellow to come too," he grumbles in an injured tone. "You are too good to that beast."

"Do I *have* to ask you? I shall be wretched if you do not come. But what's to become of those two charming little girls who are so devoted to you they cannot bear you out of their sight? How can you hurt their little feelings by deserting them?"

This is the way she plagues Bertram.

"Hang those girls!" he ejaculates savagely as he falls into step beside her—taking care to do so on the side farthest from Czar.

"You rude boy, what if they heard you!" she exclaims, laughing, glancing over her shoulder at the group on the terrace.

"Hope they did," he says recklessly. "They're the plague of my life. Did you ever see two peas look more alike?"

Marygold is obliged to confess she never did.

"I call them the infernal twins," he says with a wicked gleam in his eye.

"If you're going to do any more swearing I won't walk with you," Marygold declares positively.

"Do you call that swearing?" he exclaims pityingly. "Well, then, I'll call them the heavenly twins—I suppose it is more fitting to talk of heaven when I'm walking with an angel."

CHAPTER V.

AFTER this the evening passes stupidly. Marygold is bored to death by Bertram's silly speeches that have never seemed so silly before; they desecrate this beautiful night and their surroundings that would make a perfect setting for a *grande passion* that she could put heart and soul into, but this is child's play!

They have strolled across the lawn that slopes down from the terrace to the cliffs overhanging the beach, and can see the sands below them gleaming white in the moonlight, and beyond the sea stretching into interminable space, looking like a sea of quicksilver.

Marygold stands lost in contemplation of this scene, while Bertram's prattle goes in one ear and out the other.

At last, perceiving she is paying no attention to him, he begins to think he had better change the subject of his conversation to something she will be more interested in, and thinking from the direction of her

gaze that she is admiring a graceful vessel that rides at anchor a short distance out at sea, he concludes he can do no better than change the conversation to it.

"That is St. Bride's yacht, the Lore Lei," he begins by way of introduction.

"Is it?" is the only comment Marygold vouchsafes this piece of information in a I-don't-care-if-it-is tone. This is the way she has wet-blanketed all his remarks this evening, and he takes it as a special slight to himself that this one, that he has taken such pains to make impersonal, meets a like fate.

"I don't see what you have against the yacht," he says in his most injured tone; "she's the handsomest, most complete little craft I ever saw."

"I didn't say I had anything against it—I wasn't aware of its existence until you informed me of the fact," she returns sarcastically.

"Then what are you gazing at in such moon-struck fashion?" he queries rather provokingly.

"There are other things under heaven to gaze at besides the Duke of St. Bride's yacht, I hope," she answers ironically.

"I don't see them," is Bertram's quick retort, his

eyes scanning the broad expanse of sea line on which there is not another sail in sight. "But I *do* see you are determined not to be interested in St. Bride's yacht. I wonder if you will be no more interested to hear that your old flame, Clifford Hastings, is going to run his yacht, the Daisy, against St. Bride's next week? It's only an amateur affair and will be run over a mile course just off here, so that our party can witness it from these rocks, and to keep it strictly private—though I believe some of the fellows at the yacht club, to which Hastings belongs, have got wind of the race, and I dare say will come around in their yachts to see the fun. It's the result of a bet made up at the house several days ago. Can you believe it, the odds are ten to one in the Lore Lei's favor? I'm the only fellow who will put any money on the Daisy, and not one of the girls will, for all they know Hastings' boat has never yet been beaten. But the Lore Lei's an English boat, you know, and St. Bride's a duke, and the *mater* and her set are such rabid anglomaniacs, I swear! they'd rather lose on an English boat owned by a duke than win on an American one owned by a plain mister. Now I know it's just the opposite with you—you would rather lose on

an American boat owned by a plain mister, even though he was not Hastings, than win on an English boat owned by a duke, so you'll bet on the Daisy, won't you?"

"Perhaps I would, if I bet, but I don't—you ought to know that by this time," Marygold replies loftily.

"I say, Marygold, you're in a beastly humor to-night; you can't even take a little jest," Bertram cries in earnest. "What ails you?"

"You stupid boy!" she exclaims, laughing in spite of herself; "don't you see you are putting me out of humor? We must return to the house or I won't answer for the consequences—I may set Czar on you!" Which dire threat brings Mr. Castleton back to his senses and the sad realities of life.

"That dog will be the death of me—or I of him," he says gloomily. "I have half a mind to put a bullet through him."

To which murderous threat against his life Czar pays no attention, but stalks majestically behind Marygold, no doubt comforting himself with the thought that, considering what a little mind Bertram has, the half of it can be nothing worth mentioning. When they get back to the house they find that some

friends having dropped in and augmented the number of the party, an impromptu dance has been arranged, and a waltz is in full swing in the square hall, which is about the coolest place to be found.

"Give me this waltz!" Bertram exclaims ecstatically, all his woes quickly forgotten when he sees what is on the *tapis*, for next to himself—and Marygold—Bertram loves dancing better than anything in the world.

"No, thank you, Bertie, we've had enough of each other's society for one night. I have had enough of yours if you have not of mine," Marygold says with cruel candor. "Besides, I don't think I will dance with any one to-night; I am a little fatigued with traveling."

"Oh! yes, you will, if St. Bride asks you," Bertram retorts, relapsing into his gloomy tones; "you won't be able to resist him—none of you girls can."

"I don't think there is any danger of my being led into temptation," Marygold says scornfully. "Don't you see how occupied he is with Beatrice?"

Beatrice and the duke are waltzing together and appear oblivious of every one but themselves—at least Beatrice does. Bertram follows their figures with his eyes for a few moments in silence.

"I wonder if that will be a match," he says at length reflectively. "This much I know, it won't be Bee's fault if it isn't." Bertram is always very candid in his criticisms of his sister, and Marygold has already seen enough to be convinced of the truth of this one.

Murray Stuyvesant is standing at the open hall door, watching the dancers with a contemptuous smile on his lips that makes him look even uglier than usual. If there is one thing in the world Stuyvesant hates more than another—he hates everything with such impartial cordiality that it is hard to tell—it is dancing. Wild horses could not draw him into it, and it seems to irritate him to see others enjoying it. When he sees Marygold he turns upon her sharply:

"Where have you been all this time?" he questions in his peremptory fashion that always kindles her ire.

She deigns no reply, but Bertram answers for her.

"I have had her down on the rocks," he says in the elderly tone he loves to use toward Marygold, which is exceedingly comical in combination with his youthful appearance.

Stuyvesant smiles, but pays no other attention.

As Marygold is about to step by him into the

hall without apparently noticing him, he remarks cynically:

"I suppose you intend making a fool of yourself dancing this hot night, like those other fools in there."

She has *not* intended to, but after this she would dance though she dropped dead with fatigue. Maintaining her haughty silence, she sweeps by him, but Bertram speaks up savagely:

"I'll shoot the first fellow who asks her. She wouldn't dance with me so she shan't dance with anybody."

"You'll exhaust your ammunition, Bertie," Marygold laughs back at him as she is besieged for the waltz by half a dozen men, who, having heard of her arrival at "The Castle," have called this evening especially to pay their *devoirs* to her—among them Clifford Hastings, her "old flame," as Bertram designated him.

It is funny to see Bertram's face as Marygold grants Hastings the waltz and promises a dance to each of her other admirers in the order of their asking; it is puckered into a scowl that in combination with his pretty features and pink-and-white complexion is more ridiculous than fearful. Stuyvesant, for his

part, only turns on his heel with a smile that is simply contemptuous.

However much Clifford Hastings may admire Marygold, she has no particular admiration for him. He is a handsome, dashing sort of a man, but too careless in the way he takes things, too prone to treat with levity the most serious and sacred things of life to be the kind of a man she could admire, and she fancies he values money more than anything else, for he always treats her with a deference and respect that is not his usual manner toward her sex, though this may be because she treats him with so much indifference, for it is a well-known fact that an indifferent mistress makes a jealous lover, and *vice versa*; but Marygold is inclined to believe it is her millions that inspire his respect, for while she knows this rule applies to most men, he is likely to be the exception that proves the rule, for instead of feeling respect for the girl who snubbed him, he would probably feel like swearing at her, for he is not used to being snubbed by girls, while—shall we say it?—he is used to swearing. He is much admired in Bluepoint society for being wealthy and a fashionable, well-known club-man of New York; he is what Bluepoint mammas with marriage-

able daughters consider a “desirable *parti*”—a phrase that covers a multitude of sins in their eyes. What if he is a sinner, that does not outweigh his many advantages in the estimation of the mammas, and in the estimation of the daughters it rather gives him a sort of dangerous fascination—sinners are so much more interesting than saints, or even the average good men.

But he is not the least bit interesting to Marygold, and though he has told her more than once that she has it in her power to reform him, and pathetically appealed to her if she did not think it was her duty to do so, not being one of those silly creatures who think they are fulfilling their mission in life if they sacrifice themselves for the reformation of a masculine member of society, she has always told him decidedly she does *not*; and besides, he would be no more interesting to her as a reformed sinner than in his state of original sin.

She met him first at “The Castle” three summers ago, and sees him constantly during her visits there, for he spends his summers at Bluepoint, and as much of his time as he can at “The Castle” while she is there (before he met her he paid considerable atten-

tion to Beatrice, who has never quite forgiven Marygold for alienating his affections), and she sees a great deal of him in Philadelphia during the winter, for he manages to spend much of his time there—she knows she must be the only attraction that city can have for a New Yorker like Hastings.

Stuyvesant is never done lecturing her for not cutting his acquaintance, darkly insinuating he is not a fit man for a girl to know, for if there is one of Marygold's suitors Stuyvesant hates more than another it is Hastings; but as Marygold would make friends with a rag-man if Stuyvesant told her to cut him, it goes without saying she not only does *not* cut Hastings' acquaintance, but after one of these lectures she actually tries to be agreeable to him—though it goes against the grain.

Hastings is too astute a man not to see that he owes all her favors to his worst enemy, but as he profits by the situation, and not the enemy, he is too philosophical to quarrel with it. For instance, this evening the only reason Marygold gives him the waltz is because she knows if there is anything Stuyvesant hates to see more than her waltzing, it is to see her waltzing with Hastings.

As soon as she sees Stuyvesant has gone off in disgust, she asks Hastings to excuse her from the rest of the waltz.

"I am a little tired with traveling," she explains.

But Hastings stands on his rights and says he only will on condition that she will let him sit it out with her, and talk to her.

"Well, if you don't mind my yawning," she answers a little rudely.

"Oh! I'll try not to be tiresome," he laughs. "Where shall we sit—in here or out on the terrace?"

"On the terrace—it is so warm in here," she says.

A full moon riding high in the heavens makes it almost as light on the terrace as in the hall. A solitary figure, at the far end, smoking a cigar, Marygold recognizes as Stuyvesant. She hopes he recognizes them.

Hastings leads the way to a bench and they seat themselves upon it.

"Now for something to talk about that will not be tiresome," he says, tugging at his mustache and frowning at the ground as though at his wits' end for a subject of conversation. "I have it—the duke!" he exclaims after a few moments of silence, apparently

spent in hard thinking, and turning squarely upon Marygold. "Girls never tire of talking about a duke. What do you think of his grace?"

"Really, I do not think of him at all," Marygold responds, elaborately suppressing a yawn.

Hastings laughs.

"I warrant his grace could not say the same of you," he observes.

"I fail to comprehend your meaning, Mr. Hastings," Marygold says icily.

"Really, Miss Dare, you are the most modest girl in the world!" he exclaims, laughing. "Do you mean to say you don't know what has brought the duke to America?"

"I know I don't care," is Marygold's characteristic response.

"I'm glad to hear it," Hastings says truthfully; "it gives some of us American men a chance. We don't generally have much when a duke is around, for a duke is as irresistible to the average American girl as she is to the duke—if she happens to be an heiress. Heiresses have an attraction for dukes that is only equaled by the attractions dukes have for heiresses; they are the loadstars that draw them to America."

wants to think she is as gay and *insouciant* as she has ever been—why should she not be?—and to keep up the delusion, she flirts desperately. She is queen of the night, but as the duke does not acknowledge her power, Beatrice need not be jealous of her court of admirers—over which she rules with a sway than which no queen's was ever more despotic. Anyway, no doubt Beatrice knows as well as Marygold herself just how much of the admiration is given to Marygold Dare, *per se*, and Marygold Dare, the heiress.

It is midnight ere the heiress dismisses her court—ere the night's guests of "The Castle" take their departure—and long after ere sleep holds undisputed sway within "The Castle" walls; while without the moon, that rides high in the heavens, and holds earth and sea under a spell of enchantment, rests her silver wand upon turret and arch and mullioned window, when lo! the nineteenth century slips away and there stands an enchanted castle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, breakfast over, Marygold asks Bertram, who has taken good care not to be entrapped by the Misses Smytherston-Smythers again, and intrenched himself at her table, to accompany her in her customary morning walk with Czar, for she thinks she is safe in giving him the invitation, as she does not think he will accept it, for he is usually very chary of his attentions to Czar and shrinks very modestly from any his majesty might bestow on him.

But her calculations are all put out, for he says he will accompany her with pleasure on condition that she afterward visits the stables with him.

Now the "stables" is a charmed word to Marygold, who loves horses far more than people at this stage in her life, for it is a very critical stage, and the specimens of humanity she has met with so far, especially at "The Castle," have never given her any reason to be less faultfinding, whereas what fault *can* there be

found with a perfect thoroughbred? So it has the effect of banishing all thoughts of Czar, for the time being, from her mind—as the wily Bertram counted upon its doing—and she slips her arm through his and draws him in the direction he wishes to go, with an alacrity that exceeds his own.

They leave the breakfast-room, which, save by themselves, is deserted by this time, going out through the glass door opening on to the *parterre*, around which winds the drive back to the stables. Beyond the drive is a well-rolled lawn on which a tennis court is laid out, and to this it is apparent the other folks from the breakfast-room have wandered. It is a pretty sight to see the ladies in their different-hued frocks, and the gentlemen in their flannels, dotted upon the greensward.

Bertram stops short.

“Let’s join them!” he exclaims, for he is as changeable as a weathercock.

“Not until I have paid my *devoirs* to my friends in the stables,” Marygold answers, trying to pull him along the drive. Tennis is not her strong point, while it is Bertram’s, which accounts for him being more enthusiastic on the subject than she is. “Is

that Beatrice and the Duke of St. Bride playing against Miss Ralston and Mr. Fitz-Gerald?"

"Yes. St. Bride is a champion player—when he and Bee get together they think themselves invincible. Let us play them, Marygold, and show them they are mistaken! We will call it America *vs.* England. Bee was always half English, you know, and now the duke has wholly converted her. Thank heaven, I'm not made that way!"

"Don't you like him?" Marygold asks quickly.

"Do you?" he retorts, turning sharply upon her.

"That is not the question," she answers evasively.

"I have only been acquainted with him two days—how can I tell what he is like? But it is different with you. He was here a week before I came, and besides, you saw a great deal of him while you were all in England this spring."

"You are very much mistaken. I never set eyes on him until he arrived in this country!" Bertram replies, enjoying her look of surprise. "We were entertained by his mother while we were in London, but St. Bride had just left England for a cruise around the world when we got there—which nicely upset the *mater's* match-making schemes; you know she has set

"You needn't be," Marygold says, laughing. "The Misses Smytherston-Smythers are still true to their old love."

He scowls ferociously at this.

"Those infernal twins again—confound them!" he growls savagely. "You always drag their names into the conversation just when a fellow has succeeded in forgetting them. I was only thinking of you. I wouldn't care if I thought you would hold out, but as I said before, I know that can't be; you'll capitulate like all the rest of them. It's only a question of time."

This he says to get even with her, and he does with a vengeance, for though she exclaims scornfully, "No danger!" she turns away her face that he may not see the vivid blush that has suffused it to the very roots of the little curls upon her brow; and wherefore should she blush unless she feels deep down in her heart that she is in just such danger?

At this moment Beatrice catches sight of them and challenges them to a game. She and the duke have routed Miss Ralston and Fitz-Gerald, and now she wants to have the satisfaction of beating Marygold, for tennis is the one thing she can excel at.

Marygold knows this and hesitates, for of all things she hates most to be beaten; but when the artful Bertram whispers, "If you refuse they will think you are afraid to play them," she hesitates no longer, for she would rather even be beaten than be thought afraid, so she assumes a bold front and takes her position on the tennis court opposite their formidable opponents with a show of quite as much *nonchalance* as Bertram—who is one of those fools who rush in where angels fear to tread—really feels.

"Ladies and gentlemen, attention!" he exclaims pompously, looking around upon the non-combatants seated on the rustic benches surrounding the court. "The forthcoming contest will be one of international importance. Miss Dare and your humble servant will represent America, and the Duke of St. Bride and my respected sister, England—providing she has no objections to so doing. Have you, sis?"

He accompanies this question with a sly wink, but Beatrice does not resent it, so pleased is she with his proposition.

"Certainly not; I shall be most happy," she answers readily. "You know, I consider myself more English than American. More of my life has been

passed in England than in this country. I *live* when I am there; I merely exist here."

Bertram gives Marygold, who is gazing at Beatrice speechless with contempt and indignation, a droll look, but it is evident the rest of her audience admire her sentiments (with the exception of the Duke of St. Bride, who has stepped aside to receive a message one of the Lore Lei's sailors has brought him from her captain, and so it is impossible to tell what he thinks of her speech, or even whether he has heard it), and unanimously indorse them.

"Don't you think life in an English country house is *adorable*!" Miss Ralston exclaims vivaciously to Fitz-Gerald, anxious to let him know that she has breathed that aristocratic atmosphere.

"Yes, indeed!" he responds fervently; but it is evident he is thinking more of the adorableness of Beatrice, upon whom his eyes are fastened, than of that of an English country house.

"Englishmen are the only men I can tolerate," Fitz-Gerald *soeur* declares emphatically.

"What, Frank, have you forgotten Chappie!" exclaims the impertinent Bertram in affected surprise. Smytherston-Smythers has forgotten her if she has

not him. He has not even heard what she has said, for, as usual, he has eyes and ears for no one but his hostess.

"Weally, Miss Beatrice is wight, doncher know, when she says she is more English than American—she looks it, doncher know, and so do you, Mrs. Castleton," he is saying—or rather lisping to her—the while he gazes at her admiringly through his monocle. "Others have remarked it besides myself. The other morning at the Casino I was talking with my friend, Sir Weggie Montjoy, when you and Miss Beatrice entered. Sir. Weggie had just been laughing at the way Americans imitate the English, doncher know, but as soon as he saw you he exclaimed, 'Now there, my dear Cholmondeley, are a couple of my country women, I'll stake my spurs! I can always tell the swans from the geese.'"

"What a pity you had to undeceive him," Mrs. Castleton says, laughing.

"Why didn't you tell us that pretty compliment before, Mr. Smytherston-Smythers?—it was very cruel of you not to!" Beatrice exclaims with unusual vivaciousness.

"Which does 'Weggie' take you for, Chappie, a

swan or a 'goose'?" Bertram asks with an expression of infantile innocence, to the intense confusion of Smytherston-Smythers, and the annoyance of his mother and sister.

"Little boys should be seen, and not heard, Bertram," Mrs. Castleton remarks, skillfully concealing her anger under a gravely reproving tone, as if she were talking to a very little boy indeed.

Bertram reddens angrily. This is the one subject on which he is vulnerable. Any allusion to his age, or rather youth, is a barbed shaft that can pierce as nothing else can the armor of self-complacency in which he is incased, and that is why his mother always makes some such allusion when she wishes to bring him down a peg or two.

"If a fellow's still a boy at twenty-four, I'd like to know when he's a man!" he exclaims wrathfully.

"Wait until you have attained that advanced age, when you will be more competent to judge," Beatrice remarks sarcastically. "In the meantime, let us dismiss the subject, for it is not interesting to any one but yourself—excepting, perhaps, Sibyl and Sylvia," she adds slyly, glancing at the twins, who are seated on a bench too far off to hear her, gazing at Bertram

in a way that plainly says he would be a hero in their eyes whether fifteen or fifty.

He casts a glance in their direction that is positively murderous, muttering under his breath for Marygold's benefit, "Those girls make me sick," and then he turns to settle Beatrice.

"Of course, you'd like to make me out an infant in long clothes, because I'm younger than you are," he retorts revengefully. "It's as plain as daylight why *you* are not interested in the subject, and want to dismiss it."

Beatrice grows as red as it is possible for one of her pale complexion, and shoots a Parthian glance at him from under her long eyelashes. But the duke returning at this moment, she thinks it is wiser to drop the subject and begin the game, and revenge herself upon her exasperating brother by beating him.

CHAPTER VII.

BERTRAM does not think there is the least danger of this, but Marygold—tennis, as has been said before, not being her strong point—is very much afraid there is, and the thought makes her a bit nervous, for after what Bertram has said about calling it an international contest, that has caused all the non-combatants to watch it with particular interest, she is particularly anxious to beat the duke and Beatrice, and for the same reason to be beaten by them will be more distasteful to her than an ordinary defeat.

Unfortunately, owing to this nervousness, she plays more poorly than usual. She either misses the balls altogether or sends them flying at random over the court, to her intense mortification and the spectators' intense delight, for they are one and all in sympathy with the duke and Beatrice, and they predict an easy victory for the "English," and an ignominious defeat for the "Americans,"

And apart from their delight at the way the game is going, they are delighted to have an opportunity to witness Marygold's discomfiture, for the lofty scorn she takes no pains to conceal that she feels for their contemptible devotion to everything English, and their snobbish adoration of titles, and the proud aloofness she maintains toward them in consequence, has made them all her enemies.

Bertram's well-meant advice: "Keep cool, Marygold; don't get rattled," exasperates her more than anything.

"It's easy to say 'keep cool,' but how are you going to do it, I'd like to know, playing tennis when it's eighty degrees in the shade, and you're being beaten?" she retorts hotly.

Beatrice looks as cool as a cucumber. Marygold grows hotter every time she looks at her—but that's different, *she's* winning.

Bertram does his best to turn the fortune of the day, but single-handed he is no match for Beatrice, who in her determination to be revenged upon him, surpasses her usual style of playing, which is always surpassing. As to the duke—Marygold at her best would not be a match for him, and this day she is completely

at his mercy. But he shows her none, possibly because he reads her well enough to know that for him to do so would wound her pride more than defeat. She wants him to treat her quite as if he were playing with his equal at the game, though she has to pay so dearly for it, and her ruffled feelings are a wee bit soothed by the consciousness that he does. Nevertheless, with graceless inconsistency, because he does—because he drives the ball at her in the same way he would to one equal to returning such splendid serving, she says to herself that such rough playing is positively ungentlemanly, and at length, losing her temper entirely as the prospect of her losing the game appears inevitable, she flings down her racket, declaring angrily she will not play another stroke.

“I’m not accustomed to such rough playing,” she says haughtily. “You Englishmen win through sheer brute force.”

“Well, they win—that’s better than to lose,” Mrs. Castleton laughs provokingly, while all the others stare at Marygold aghast to hear her speak so rudely to a duke—excepting Bertram, who is almost content to be defeated for the sake of having Marygold out on the warpath; and the duke himself.

"What? Only a game after all—one would think life and death depended upon it!" Marygold retorts scornfully. "Now when life and death really are at stake, we win every time."

"You bet we do!" is Bertram's emphatic indorsement of this patriotic sentiment.

"I suppose you are thinking of the War of the Revolution—that's such an old victory now, Marygold, it makes Americans rather ridiculous to be flaunting it in the faces of the English still," Beatrice observes, determined to make amends to the duke for Marygold's rudeness.

"It made the English rather ridiculous at the time," Marygold says, regarding her with a look of withering contempt. "There was nothing ridiculous about it for us. It was the greatest war the world ever witnessed—not because it brought the greatest armies into the field, nor because it cost the greatest number of human lives, but because it was the birth of the greatest country in the world!"

"Bravo! bravo!" cries Bertram, clapping his hands in delight, but the rest of her auditors maintain an ominous silence, and look at the duke confidently expecting him to be deeply insulted by this arrogant

assertion. Then what is their surprise and disappointment to see that he not only does not look insulted, but as if he agreed with Marygold, in proof of which he joins with Bertram in applauding her. And even Marygold is disappointed, for such is her combative frame of mind it exasperates her to think she cannot make him angry.

Mrs. Castleton is especially chagrined, for she thought this display by Marygold of her rabid Americanism would disgust the duke and make him quickly reconsider any favorable opinion her millions may have caused him to form regarding her suitableness to be a duchess.

"Marygold, *ma chere*," she says in her very sweetest tones, that she knows always inflames Marygold's ire as does oil poured upon a fire, "you should learn to accept defeat gracefully. It is very unsportsmanlike to lose your temper, because you lose the game, and, after all that's about the real *raison d'être* of those patriotic utterances to which you have treated us."

"Wait until we're defeated before you read us a lecture upon accepting defeat gracefully, mother,"

Bertram speaks up with his customary audacity.

"The game isn't over yet."

"And you wait until you're spoken to before giving your opinion," his mother says quietly, but the gleam in her steel-blue eyes portrays her anger. "The game *is* over; Marygold said she would not play another stroke. When you throw up a fair fight it proves you are afraid of your adversary, and any umpire will give him the victory."

"Do you hear that? are you going to let yourself rest under the imputation of being *afraid*? Bertram whispers in Marygold's ear.

"Not if I know myself!" she returns under her breath.

"Aunt Elinor," she says aloud, "any *fair* umpire will allow you to make objections to your adversary's manner of fighting—which was the stand I took—for it has nothing to do with your being afraid of him. To prove my point I will finish the game. Besides, I am roused up now. I feel as if I, too, can play as if life and death depend upon the issue," and her eyes meet the duke's with an unmistakable challenge in their glance. But they quickly fall before the look of unqualified friendliness in his.

The game is resumed, and it is followed with even greater interest by the spectators than before.

As Marygold said, she is thoroughly aroused by this time. Mrs. Castleton's taunts have put her on her mettle, and she plays brilliantly; she is like another girl; even Beatrice is eclipsed. The duke, with a look of laughter in his handsome eyes, drives the ball at her as hard as before, but she is equal to the situation now, and returns it with a vim hardly inferior to his own. Bertram, too, exhilarated by the consciousness that his partner is a help and not a hindrance to him, surpasses himself, and the result is that almost before they can realize their good fortune, they have won the game.

A shout goes up from Bertram that might wake the dead, but it does not awaken to enthusiasm the spectators, who preserve a silence like the grave, for they are completely dumfounded. Even the twins, though glad of the way the victory has gone on Bertram's account, are too timid to say so, knowing from experience that he will not pay the least attention to them, while his mother will, and be much displeased; and they are too anxious to keep her favor—to which they owe the happiness of staying at "The Castle"

and breathing the same air as their divinity, and certainly not to their divinity—to run the risk of losing it; so they keep as mum as the rest.

Beatrice is the first to break the silence. She is deeply chagrined that Marygold has been able to beat her even at tennis.

“I was so sure the game was ours that I played carelessly,” she says to the duke to excuse her defeat.

“Yes, and I dare say his grace did also,” her mother chimes in; “after you objected, Marygold, to the way he played just because he was beating you! I would rather be fairly beaten than owe my victory to the indulgence of my opponents as if I were a child.”

Marygold grows crimson, and Bertram exclaims indignantly:

“Indulgence, indeed! if that isn’t great! I suppose you want to make out they gave us the game—I never heard such nonsense.”

But the duke quickly changes the situation.

“I’m sure it’s very kind of you, Mrs. Castleton,” he says lightly, “to try to make excuses for me, but I really have none to make. Instead of playing carelessly, I played with unusual carefulness, for as soon

as we resumed the game I saw we would not be able to walk away with the victory as preceding events had led us to expect, but that we would have to fight for it, and fight hard. We did—as far as I am concerned, at least. The combat was short, but decisive; Miss Dare and Bertram have won an unequivocal victory. They sprang a very clever *coup d'état* upon us," he concludes, laughing.

Neither Mrs. Castleton nor Beatrice see anything to laugh at in his words—Mrs. Castleton only smiles a sickly smile that is not very mirthful—but Bertram does. Marygold, for her part, can only stare at the duke, unable to believe her own ears. Had any one told her an Englishman could have spoken so generously of his victorious adversaries she would have laughed him to scorn.

Meeting St. Bride's glance at this moment, she turns abruptly away, conscious of a deep blush, and walks over to one of the benches, asking herself what that blush may mean. Hearing Bertram following her she drops upon the bench and begins flapping her sailor hat before her flushed face as if quite exhausted with the heat, but she really wishes the hat to act more the part of a screen than a fan. She does not

care to have Bertram's sharp eyes looking into hers just now; she is rather doubtful of the tale they may tell.

"Isn't St. Bride a trump!" he exclaims as he comes up to her, and seats himself beside her on the bench. He can just see the couple of bright little curls on her brow bobbing up and down in the stiff breeze caused by the flapping of her hat; the rest of her face is invisible.

"Won't you go to the house, Bertram, and get me a fan? I am so warm from playing, and if I use this hat much longer in that capacity it will be brimless," comes pathetically from behind the screen. And Bertram, always eager to obey his queen's behests, goes at once, suspecting nothing.

Marygold draws a breath of relief that she has got rid of him, though but for a brief space; it will give her telltale color a chance to subside. But this relief is of short duration, for hardly has Bertram vacated the seat beside her on the bench, which holds but two, when St. Bride strolls over to her and drops into it.

She feels her color go from red to white, and from white to red again. How thankful she is for the

friendly screen, her hat! She flaps it before her face as though her life depended upon it. To save her, she cannot collect her scattered wits enough to think of a word to say! Can this be herself, Marygold Dare, afraid of a man, and an Englishman at that? Impossible! This thought touches the right key; she is her proud self again—or nearly.

“That is Bertram’s seat,” she says coolly, but in spite of herself just a suspicion of laughter will creep into her tone.

“I know it is,” he answers, regarding her with smiling eyes as she sits as far back in her corner of the bench as she can, fanning her flushed face with her much-abused hat with a vigor that instead of decreasing her warmth, must greatly increase it. “I will give it up to him as soon as he returns. But in the meantime may I ask you a question? Now that the English method of playing tennis has given you the victory, do you not think you will adopt it? A game that is worth playing is worth winning, and if the only way to win is by playing as if life and death depended upon the issue, surely it must be the only way to play.”

His coolness in saying this quite takes Marygold’s

breath away, and effectually relieves her of any embarrassment that still bothers her.

She drops her screen and meets his eyes unflinchingly a little defiantly. Is her hostility to him and his country a matter of such indifference to him that it only amuses him? or can it be that he is still in doubt as to her hostility, notwithstanding the drubbing she gave him and his country so recently?

"I marvel at your temerity in challenging me to another passage of words on this subject!" she exclaims mockingly. "Surely the wounds are not healed that you received in the one we had only five minutes ago!"

"Ah! those were only scratches—I did not mind them, he says, laughing. But "talking about wounds—my heart received one night before last that will never be healed, that makes me indifferent to all others."

He is still smiling into her eyes and for one moment she lets him hold her gaze, not realizing the meaning of his words. Then it flashes upon her, her eyes fall, and a burning blush dyes her cheeks that is painful in its intensity. How dare he take the liberty of saying such a thing, even though only in jest, on a

two days' acquaintance! Does he think that the fact of his being a duke throws a glamour around him for her as it does for other girls, who, if he said such a thing to them, would not think he had taken a liberty, but that he had done them the very greatest honor! Has she not snubbed him enough to convince him of the contrary? Why can she not say something now, then, that will relieve him of all doubt on the subject if he still labors under any? or with a look annihilate him for his presumption? Why must she sit here tongue-tied, with downcast eyes, blushing like a very milkmaid at some tender whisper of her rustic swain?

CHAPTER VIII.

"MA CHERE, you look warm—take my fan."

Marygold starts and looks up quickly to find Mrs. Castleton standing beside her, regarding her coldly with her steely blue eyes. She has not heard her approach over the soft turf. How long has she been standing there? Has she heard what the duke said? The thought is intolerable. It is with difficulty that she masters her conflicting emotions sufficiently to reply.

"Thank you, Aunt Elinor, you are very kind," she says in as steady a voice as she can command, "but Bertram has gone to the house to get me a fan, and he must be back in a minute. Here he comes now!"

"Then I must restore his seat to him," the duke says, laughing, rising from the bench. It is evident the thought that Mrs. Castleton may have overheard does not bother him.

"Come and sit here, your grace, I have something to say to you," Mrs. Castleton says in a tone of voice

Marygold knows from experience means mischief to her, leading the way to another bench. Well, she has never cared before how much mischief her aunt made, why should she now? But she knows she does care as Mrs. Castleton's low, insidious laugh comes over to her, echoed by the duke's. What does it mean? is there some secret understanding between them to work her humiliation? Has her aunt told him of her boasted scorn of titles, and has he laid a wager that he will accomplish her conquest before their joint visit to "The Castle" is over? Is he telling now of his success so far? There is torture in the thought. It is only by holding on desperately to the bench that she can keep herself from rushing over and confronting them, and telling them that she defies them, scorns them!

She has forgotten all about Bertram, who has come up to her by this time, and stares in amazement at sight of her strange attitude and stormy eyes.

"Hello! what's the matter?" he ejaculates. "You look like a little fury. Are you mad at the *mater* for carrying off St. Bride?"

It is just such a speech as this that Marygold needs to recall her to herself. Bertram is a good doctor,

his doses are hard to take, but they're mighty effectual. She relaxes the grip upon the bench, and faces him combatively, glad to have some one to vent her wrath upon.

"What has kept you all this time?" she demands. "Were you making the fan?"

"Couldn't find the plagued thing anywhere," he answers. "But you needn't fly off on the fan—you can't throw dust in my eyes that way—you had forgotten all about it. Didn't I see you glaring at the *mater* and St. Bride as if you would have liked to eat one or t'other of them—or both? You had no eyes for me. I tell you, Marygold, it looks mighty suspicious. You never used to care how much the *mater* maneuvered. Don't you suppose I can see what she's maneuvering about as well as you? Didn't I tell you she has set her heart upon having St. Bride marry Beatrice, and do you suppose she will let you cut Bee out?—not if she can help it! But she can't, not when she has a fellow to deal with like St. Bride, so don't you worry. I believe that is just what you are worrying about. I believe my words have already come true, and that hitherto impregnable citadel, your heart, has at last capitulated, as I said it would, to

St. Bride! Think of it! to a despised Englishman, and alps on alps, a duke!"

Marygold does not smile at this; she looks so tremendously grave that Bertram wishes his words unsaid. He meant them in jest and he thinks it a bad sign that she seems to take them in earnest, as if she felt the truth of them. If they were true he would be sorry, and would not feel like jesting about it.

"Bertram," she says impressively—more impressively than she has ever before spoken to him, and he grows quite melancholy—"if I did not think you only said that in jest I would never forgive you. And if I thought you would ever even only jest on this subject to the Duke of St. Bride, *I would never speak to you again.*"

"How can you think me capable of doing so!" he exclaims, between melancholy and reproach, on the verge of tears. "There are some things that are sacred to us, and you are sacred to me. It would be desecration to me to jest about you behind your back to any one, however much I may tease you to your face. I never speak about you to St. Bride except to laud you to the skies."

"That's all the worse!" Marygold exclaims, biting

her lips with vexation; "he may think I've bribed you to do so! From henceforth oblige me by never mentioning my name to him."

"All right, I'll try not to, but I don't see how I can help it, for I can't keep your name off my lips more than two minutes at a time," he says despondently. "It's awfully rough on a fellow to pitch into him so for something he said just in fun. Do you believe if I thought there was a word of truth in what I said, I would jest about it? I wouldn't have the heart to jest about it, or anything else ever again—my heart would be broken. I would just go down to the sea and jump in! I think I'll do it anyway. I don't care to live any more after you have spoken to me like this. You couldn't have done it a little while ago, but you seem different now, somehow. I never saw any one so changed in forty-eight hours in all my life," and rising he wends his way dejectedly, with bent head, down toward the sea, looking as if he were broken-hearted indeed.

This pathetic appeal quite melts Marygold until he pronounces its peroration. That hardens her again, and she calls after him with heartless flippancy, "Remember me to the mermaids."

Then whistling with a jaunty air to Czar, who at this moment opportunely appears upon the scene, she strolls off for a walk with the mastiff in the very opposite direction to that which Bertram has taken.

She does not see him again until dinner, by which time she has grown just a little bit uneasy, for he has never before of his own free will absented himself so long from her society, though she will not let him know this, but feigns not to have expected ever to see him again.

"I thought you were 'down in the deep, deep caverns of the sea,' flirting with the mermaids," she says unconcernedly, as he takes his place beside her at the table. It has not taken him long to change his seat from between the Misses Smytherston-Smythers to one beside Marygold. Hers has also been changed, to her intense relief. It is no longer beside the duke as on the night of her arrival, but several places from him on the same side of the board, so that he cannot even see her without twisting his neck out of joint—perhaps an intentional arrangement on the part of Mrs. Castleton. She hated enough to have Marygold sitting beside him for only one night, but she could not help that, for the honor of being taken

out to dinner by the duke is one that she accords to each of her lady guests on their first night at "The Castle," and she could not make an exception to Marygold, however much she would have liked to.

Bertram is not at all abashed at being still in the flesh after having so solemnly declared it as his intention to "shuffle off this mortal coil"—but then nothing can abash Bertram.

"A fellow gets hungry even when flirting with mermaids," he says with the utmost gravity; "so I came back for my dinner. Ugh, that salt water!—I can't get the taste of it out of my mouth."

"Didn't the mermaids ask you to stay to dinner—how very inhospitable of them!" Marygold exclaims with a perfectly straight face.

"Of course they asked me," Bertram responds quite as seriously, "but they dine on pearls dissolved in brine—wine not being handy at the bottom of the sea—*à la* Cleopatra, you know (wasn't it Cleopatra who drank dissolved pearls, or was it Pocahontas? But no, Pocahontas' ornaments weren't pearls but scalps—scalps dissolved in brine would be even less palatable than pearls dissolved in wine), and as a fellow without a fish's tail can't make a square meal on pearls

even though dissolved in brine, I declined their invitation with thanks. That reminds me—they gave me my share of the pearls undissolved, saying that as I couldn't eat them or very well wear them either, I might give them to my best girl. I told them I hadn't any best girl any more, which greatly surprised them, for they didn't know that we had quarreled, but they insisted upon my taking them anyway, and giving them to you as a peace offering."

Marygold has tried hard to listen with unmoved gravity to this romance, and succeeds almost to the end when, alas! her pent-up merriment will no longer be restrained, and finds vent in a fit of laughter, all the heartier for having been checked. Unfortunately this occurs just when she is about to swallow an oyster—the result is, she is almost choked. Whereupon Bertram, to make matters worse, begins thumping her vigorously upon the back. Every eye upon the opposite side of the table turns upon her, and every neck on her own side, including the duke's, is stretched to see what is the matter, while Mrs. Castleton asks the question in awful tones.

"She's choking over a pearl, mother," Bertram answers in the most innocent voice imaginable.

"You shouldn't be so extravagant as to serve pearls with oysters, for not only might you have them set in rings for yourself or Beatrice, or scarf-pins for me, but you run the risk of having some one choke to death at your table, and then not only would you lose the pearls but you'd have to pay damages to assuage the grief of their bereaved relatives."

What between laughing and coughing, Marygold cannot find breath to excuse herself, and she feels that she deserves to be severely reprimanded by her aunt for behaving like such a child, and an ill-mannered one at that, at the table. But to her surprise her aunt says not a word, but passes by the incident with silent contempt as if it were beneath her attention.

But that is not really the case. She is secretly delighted that Marygold has made such a display of bad manners, for she feels confident it must disgust the duke with her if nothing else will, and she knows a way of turning it to more account than by openly reprimanding her.

"Your grace must excuse my niece," she says apologetically, taking care to speak in a voice too low for Marygold to hear. "You must have perceived

how unconventional, how, I regret to say, unpolished she is. I hope you do not consider me responsible. If she had been reared under my training, she would have been very different, but I never even *saw* her until her manners, such as they are, were fully formed. She was brought up in the extreme West, which, as regards the customs and manners of polite society, is still little better than in a state of barbarism. Her mother, who was my sister, died when she was an infant. Had she lived she might have counteracted the effect on her daughter of her unfortunate environment, but with no one but her father to direct her, Marygold's condition was hopeless. Mr. Dare (I never could think of him as my brother-in-law) was a self-made man—you know the type! How my sister could marry him was inexplicable to me. It was certainly not for his money, for he had not made it then, and besides Amy was not that sort—she was an affectionate little thing. It was a case of simple infatuation. Poor Amy! I never saw her after her marriage. I could not bring myself to go West, and her boorish husband would not let her come East."

Here Mrs. Castleton sighs, apparently oppressed by painful memories. She does not tell the duke that

it was on her account that Mr. Dare did not let his wife come East—he despised her. Though sisters no two people could have been more unlike than she and his wife, who adored him, and, as a matter of course, thought as he thought, without any persuasion on his part, but simply because he was the stronger character, and worshiping him as she did, she was content to efface herself in him. Marygold, who could not remember her mother, and only knew of her self-effacing spirit from what her father told her, would listen to his tender reminiscences on the subject with puckered brow, wondering how any one could lose her identity in another, even though that other was her husband, for Marygold took after her father and had all his self-reliance and force of character.

“I guess it depends upon the husband, papa,” she came to the conclusion when she was fifteen. “I dare say I could efface myself for you, but I know there’s not another man in the world for whom I’d do it.”

“No, and you wouldn’t do it for me, either,” her father said, laughing. “Don’t you rule me with a rod of iron? Ah! my little Marygold, your husband will more likely efface himself for you!”

"No, he won't, papa" (Marygold had not decided not to marry at that early age), "for I could not marry a man who had no more character than that," was her characteristic response.

Mrs. Dare never regretted her effacement, or her "boorish" husband's refusal to let her come East. Instead, she was glad to renounce the worldly, fashionable life her sister had forced her to lead in New York, to which she was not at all adapted, for as Mrs. Castleton truly told the duke, she was an affectionate little thing. Not that she wasted much affection on Mrs. Castleton, who as a girl was as worldly-minded and heartless as she is as a woman—there was little love lost between them, so Mrs. Dare found no difficulty in renouncing her along with the other things that went to make up her life in the East. But Mrs. Castleton does not mention this fact to the duke.

He has listened to her disclosures concerning Marygold's parents and early history with such seeming inattention that she chooses to consider it is owing to his lack of interest in the subject.

"I understood Bertram to say that Miss Dare was a Philadelphian," he observes, as she pauses, in a tone that, though studiously careless, she does not relish.

"Oh, she has resided in Philadelphia for the last five years and likes to call herself a Philadelphian, but she was born in San Francisco, and lived there all during her childhood and early girlhood, the formative period of one's life," she returns as carelessly. "And even supposing her five years' residence there could have changed her, it could not have improved her much. Philadelphia is very different from New York—we are much more up to date; they are behind the age there."

St. Bride makes no comment upon this. Not having visited Philadelphia yet, he does not feel competent to say whether it is behind the age or not, but from the expression of his face as he turns to give his undivided attention to the second course that the servants have by this time placed before them one who could read his thoughts might say he is thinking that if to be up to date means to be like the New Yorkers he has met at "The Castle," he prefers to be a little behind the age. But there is no mind-reader at the table, so no one is any the wiser if this is what he is thinking. Nevertheless, Mrs. Castleton, as she glances sideways at him, for some reason feels just a little uncomfortable.

CHAPTER IX.

By this time Marygold has conquered her refractory risibles and is as grave as a judge—she would be much graver if she knew how her aunt has been talking about her and her parents to the duke.

“I don’t intend to laugh again this whole evening,” she declares solemnly to Bertram. “I’ve had enough laughing to last me for awhile.”

“What will you bet you don’t?” he asks eagerly.

“How often will I have to tell you I don’t bet,” she answers severely.

“I beg its ’ittle pardon! Well, then, will you pay a forfeit?”

“*Cela depend*—on the forfeit! What shall it be?”

“A kiss, of course,” he answers boldly.

“I guess so! Don’t dare mention forfeit to me again,” Marygold exclaims wrathfully.

“Why not? If you’re not going to laugh, as you were so cock sure a half minute ago you wouldn’t,

there's no danger you will have to pay it," he retorts.

"Are you less sure now?"

"Certainly not," she answers decidedly.

"You seem to be, or you wouldn't be afraid to agree to my proposal," he says tauntingly.

"I'm not afraid!" she exclaims, unwarily falling into his trap, "and to prove it I'll agree to pay the forfeit—though it's sheer nonsense, for there's not the least danger that I will have to."

"Done!" cries Bertram triumphantly, smacking his lips, evidently in anticipation already tasting the forfeit.

"This way, Marygold," he says mysteriously as, dinner over half an hour later—a half-hour wherein he has tried in vain to make her laugh—he leads the way out on to the terrace.

"What are you up to now?" she demands suspiciously, hanging back, suspecting he has some scheme on foot for making her laugh, now that all his wit has failed.

"I want to show you those pearls," he answers, lowering his voice so that the others who have followed them out on to the terrace may not hear.

"Pearls! what pearls—what *do* you mean?" she

exclaims, staring at him, thinking he must have suddenly lost his senses.

“Why, the pearls the mermaids gave me to give to you, of course—what else should I mean,” he answers, with a show of great impatience. “Come along!”

Her suspicions are confirmed, but forewarned is forearmed—now that she is prepared for one of his practical jokes she does not think there is the least danger of its exciting her hilarity, and she is just a little curious to know what it may be. So she follows him without further demur as he strides rapidly down the lawn to the cliffs.

He reaches them before her, and has begun descending the precipitous path that straggles down them to the beach thirty feet below, before she comes up. She pauses and looks down at him hesitatingly, loath to follow him any further, for this path is none too inviting in broad daylight, and at this twilight hour, when the rocks are rendered slippery by the rising mists, it is exceedingly uninviting—especially as she is so ill equipped for performing any gymnastic feats, being in evening dress and paper-soled, high-heeled slippers.

“What’s the matter—are you afraid? Shall I come

up there and carry you down?" calls back the wily Bertram.

That settles it—she hesitates no longer. In three minutes she is standing on the beach, a little pale from the risk she has run in her rapid descent, just to show that she is *not* afraid, but none the less triumphant, for she has outstripped Bertram, who is still halfway up the rocks, staring down at her quite stupefied by the suddenness and swiftness of her movement.

"Jerusalem!" he at length manages to ejaculate, "I never saw anything to beat that in all my life—except this, perhaps," and as he speaks he takes a flying leap from the rocks and lands on the sand beside her, determined not to be outdone in agility by a girl.

Marygold won't be impressed with his achievement—instead, she "makes believe" not to have even noticed it, remarking impatiently, as her eyes sweep the bare stretch of beach, "I don't see what you have brought me down here for."

"Wait a moment and you'll see and thank me for it," he replies confidently, and walking up to the rocks he takes from a crevice a parcel, which when unwrapped proves to be a velvet-covered jewel box. With a flourish Bertram raises its lid, and there on its

white satin cushion a beautiful necklace formed of three strands of pearls, each pearl of exceptional size and purity, is revealed to Marygold's bewildered vision.

For several moments she can do nothing but stare at it in silence, absolutely speechless with astonishment, while Bertram stands grinning at her, enjoying the effect he has produced.

"What does it mean? Where did they come from?" she at last finds breath to gasp.

"I've told you twice already," he answers with an expression of infantile innocence. "Aren't you going to thank the mermaids? Here, take them, they're yours."

"Do you suppose I'll touch them until you answer seriously how you came by them?" Marygold exclaims indignantly. "How do I know but what you've stolen them? You've never had enough money in all your life put together to pay for them!"

"You bet I haven't! the *mater* keeps me on such a short allowance I barely have enough to keep myself in cigarettes, much less you in pearls," he agrees readily, always glad of an opportunity to air his grievances,

"That proves you couldn't have come by them honestly!" Marygold declares triumphantly.

"It proves nothing of the kind—suppose some one else bought them and gave them to me to give to you," he says rather mysteriously, looking at her out of the corners of his eyes.

"What do you mean?" she demands quickly.

But he will give her no further satisfaction.

"Is this your gratitude?" he exclaims dramatically.

"Here have I braved the perils of the deep to get you these precious pearls, and instead of falling on my neck and thanking me with tears of gratitude, you basely question my honesty!"

"Oh, well! if you persist in being so mysterious about them you may, only don't expect me to have anything to do with them," Marygold says indifferently, and shrugging her shoulders she turns away and begins to ascend the cliffs as rapidly as possible, but her progress is perforce slower than when she descended them.

"Then what will I do with the confounded things?" Bertram exclaims, evidently in a great dilemma.

"Throw them back into the sea where you say they came from," she retorts over her shoulder derisively.

is almost within arm's length of her and she gives up all for lost, for almost exhausted with her exertion, it seems impossible to her to mount those steps before he catches her. But the ignominy of defeat, and worse, the shame of being kissed, though it is only by Bertram, with so many eyes upon her, goads her on, and with a desperate effort she pulls herself together and springs up the steps of the terrace, across it and into the hall, where she sinks prostrated upon a bench positively unable to go a step further, and covering her face with both hands, resigns herself to her fate.

In a moment more Bertram would have pounced upon his prize but for the Duke of St. Bride, who, springing forward, quickly pulls the hall door closed, and then stands before it laughingly barring the way.

The baffled Bertram drops panting upon a seat, completely "blowed," as he elegantly expresses it.

"That's—a—mean—trick, St. Bride," he gasps as he mops his perspiring brow with his handkerchief. "You've cheated me—out of something—I value more—than anything else—in the world."

"I'm awfully sorry," the duke says, trying to look so, but not succeeding very well. "What was it?"

"A kiss," Bertram answers so lugubriously as he

thinks of what he has missed that the men drown the voice of old Neptune with their laughter, and even the girls—each hoping some one may value her kisses as highly—forget to be shocked and laugh also.

CHAPTER X.

"WHAT's up for to-day?" Bertram asks as he lounges into the breakfast-room one morning a week later, and drops into a seat beside Marygold about an hour after every one else has assembled. In addition to all his other virtues, Bertram is lazy.

"What! have you forgotten the yacht race?" chorus half a dozen voices in tones of amazement.

"It is evident he hasn't been dreaming about it all night as I have," Beatrice observes in a coquettish aside to the Duke of St. Bride, with whom she is enjoying a *tête-à-tête* at one of the small tables as usual.

"Yes, I had forgotten the yacht race," Bertram admits unconcernedly, "and I had something better to dream about, Bee."

"But Marygold is to blame for that and not the yacht race, I fancy," she retorts, and everybody laughs except Bertram, who looks as solemn as if he were at a funeral, and Marygold, who does not like the joke.

"There's been some pretty tall betting on the Daisy at the Yacht Club," Fitz-Gerald, who is a member of that organization, here observes. "Hastings is one of us, you know, and a good many of the fellows have put their money on his yacht just for the honor of the club, while there are some enthusiasts who have done it for the Daisy's own sake, having a firm belief in her superiority, for she has a clean record so far, you know; she has never yet been beaten."

"I prophesy she will meet her Waterloo to-day!" Beatrice exclaims, with unusual animation.

"I hope the Lore Lei will not betray your confidence, Miss Castleton," the duke says, smiling; "but perhaps she will be the yacht which will meet a Waterloo to-day. I accepted Mr. Hastings' invitation to lunch aboard the Daisy the other morning, and a more complete, compact yacht I never saw—there is not a spare inch of timber about her. She must be a marvel in speed."

"She is," Bertram here breaks in emphatically. "Her prow cuts the water like a knife—she'll beat the Lore Lei, or any other boat afloat, any day! But she's not much on safety, I can tell you! I'd bet

on the Lore Lei there every time. I wouldn't be aboard the Daisy in a squall for her weight in gold; she'd keel over like a fellow who has too much liquor aboard."

"What a very *spirited* illustration," his mother remarks dryly. "But I really fail to see why you should favor us with it—nobody asked you for your opinion on the subject." Then turning to the duke she continues in a very different tone: "It is exceedingly kind of your grace to speak so highly of the Daisy, but you can afford to, the Lore Lei is so much finer and handsomer in every way—there is no comparison between the yachts; the Daisy is only a racer, while the Lore Lei is a pleasure yacht as well. It was really very generous of your grace to agree to Mr. Hastings' proposal to run a race, when the Daisy is such a very different class yacht from the Lore Lei."

"Yas, indweed, I think so tu," lisps Cholmondeley Smytherston-Smythers, who always echoes his hostess' opinions, partly to flatter her, and partly because he hasn't any opinions of his own.

Marygold's lip curls scornfully. She has been at "The Castle" ten days now, and each day has but

disgusted her the more with the attitude of Mrs. Castleton and her other guests toward the duke. "One would think he were a god!" she says to herself wrathfully. "They have set up an altar of worship to him whereon they are constantly burning incense of flattery," and despite the fact that nothing so far in her observation or intercourse with St. Bride justifies her in drawing such conclusions, and despite a voice in her heart that tells her she is doing him an injustice—perhaps just because of that voice—she *does* conclude that he is the vainest, the most conceited of men, however much he may hide his vanity and conceit under a democratic manner; for none but an egotist could breathe an atmosphere of such adulation, and she glances disdainfully at him. He happens to meet this glance, and a flush deepens the bronze of his cheek as if he read the thought that prompted it.

"I'm sure it is very kind of you, Mrs. Castleton, to think me so generous," he says carelessly, "but I cannot take credit for what I do not deserve. I praise the Daisy for the same reason that Bertram does—because she deserves it; and instead of its being generous of me to agree to Mr. Hastings' proposal to run a race, it was rather generous of him to propose it, if,

as you all seem to think, my yacht is so superior to his, and there is not the least doubt that he will be defeated."

Mrs. Castleton has nothing to say to this view of the subject, but Bertram has—and for once his mother does not call him to account for speaking before he is spoken to, for she is glad to have him relieve a pause that is exceedingly uncomfortable to her.

"I say, St. Bride, that's rather a sweeping assertion—to say that we *all* seem to think that the Lore Lei is superior to the Daisy, and that there is not the least doubt that the latter will be defeated!" he exclaims with his usual audacity. "I for one *don't* think so, and for another, here's Marygold, a host in herself!"

All eyes turn to the heiress for corroboration of this statement, and St. Bride says quickly:

"Of course I did not include you, Bertram, in my 'sweeping assertion,' as you call it—and I certainly would not Miss Dare when she had not said which yacht she favored."

"I thought she would incline to Mr. Hastings' yacht," Mrs. Castleton observes with an arch glance at

Marygold that is meant to express all her words leave unsaid.

"It does not matter to me whose yacht it is, so that it is American," Marygold says haughtily.

Murray Stuyvesant, who is very taciturn this morning, being sociably buried in a newspaper as usual, gives her an approving nod over the top of it at this, while Mrs. Castleton remarks in her sweetest tones, "We all know your patriotism, *ma chere*; you make no secret of it."

"I hope not! I would despise myself if I were like some other people and hadn't any," Marygold retorts.

"My dear duke," Mrs. Castleton says imperturbably, not heeding this thrust, "I must warn you against entering into a discussion on any international question with Miss Dare, for, as you have probably noticed, she has such a very great admiration for America and everything American, and is so exceedingly prejudiced against other countries, especially yours, that I cannot answer for the consequences if you do. She seems to still cherish in her heart the feud of her ancestors—one of whom signed the Declaration of Independence—against England; she never will give anything Eng-

lish its due. May you arouse in her breast a more charitable feeling for our cousins across the pond."

Something in these last words of her aunt's—is it an inner consciousness that there is danger that he may, as far as he himself is concerned at least, arouse in her breast a warmer feeling than one of charity?—causes Marygold's color to deepen—noticing which Beatrice remarks a little maliciously:

"*You* are not very charitable, mamma; you are making Marygold blush."

"Then there is a chance that his grace will convert her," Mrs. Castleton says, in a tone of suppressed mirth that aggravates Marygold beyond all endurance.


"Aunt Elinor, I will leave that to you and Beatrice," she retorts scornfully, with flashing eyes. "It is very evident that he has thoroughly converted you!"

It is now Mrs. Castleton's and Beatrice's turn to feel uncomfortable, and in the moment's awkward silence that ensues every one looks as if they felt a jarring key had been struck in the conversation. But their hostess almost immediately recovers her self-possession, which, to do her justice, has hardly deserted her, but merely been put out of countenance, as it were.

"According to all accounts his grace is quite a missionary!" she exclaims with her most charming smile. "Let us persuade him, girls, to go out to Africa, and convert the heathen there!"

"Yes, but wait until after the yacht race," chimes in Beatrice. And peace is restored in the laugh that follows.

The race is to come off at twelve o'clock, at which time the tide will be most favorable, and as this hour approaches all—with the exception of Stuyvesant who hates racing almost as much as he does dancing, and takes a train to New York to be well out of it—assemble under the marquee Mrs. Castleton has had spread on the lawn down by the cliffs to protect them from the sun while watching the race. In addition to the house party there are a number of people whom she has invited for the day, in all about a hundred and fifty, the *crème de la crème* of Bluepoint society. There are a dozen or more titled personages, from the duke, who is the cynosure of all eyes, down to Sir Reggie Montjoy, and the number of millions represented in this golden galaxy of social stars, we would not like to enumerate lest our veracity be doubted. When the race is over lunch will be served to the



guests ere they depart, nor will this end the day's festivities, for in the evening there is to be a dance at the Yacht Club in honor of the winning yacht.

It is an ideal day for a race. The breeze is just stiff enough to make good sailing, and the water choppy enough to make it exciting; and this part of the coast is an ideal spot for it to take place, for the beach runs in gradually for a mile or more on either side of "The Castle" sea front, forming a species of natural amphitheater for the event.

It is a pretty sight, looking seaward, to the occupants of the marquee. The water is as blue as the sky, across which fleecy clouds are rapidly sailing, just as the white-winged yachts of the members of the Yacht Club come sailing upon the scene to witness the race. These craft are of all shapes and sizes, and they swarm around the Lore Lei and Daisy, that stand out conspicuous for their size and beauty among them, like ducks around two graceful swans. Nor is the day too warm to be pleasant. The sun is shining brightly, but his rays are tempered by the stiff sea-breeze, just brisk enough to be exhilarating, and every one is in sparkling spirits, as they well may be with this beautiful, panorama before their eyes, and

in their ears the lively strains of music from a band stationed at one end of the marquee.

The duke has not yet boarded the *Lore Lei*, for it wants twenty minutes to twelve yet. A boat from that yacht, manned by a couple of her sailors, is drawn up on the beach, waiting to take him to her, and another boat having "Daisy" painted in white letters on its prow, that has brought Hastings over from his yacht, is also drawn up on the beach waiting to take him back again.

The duke is being monopolized as usual by Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice, who seem to think they have done enough by their guests in letting them catch a glimpse of him; while Hastings is trying to monopolize Marygold.

"I cannot go back to the *Daisy* until you have told me what luck she will meet with to-day," he says to her with a sentimental look. I have come over especially to consult you on the subject, just as the ancient Greeks made pilgrimages to Delphi to consult the oracle there, having a superstitious fancy that whatever fortune you predict for the *Daisy* will befall her."

"I am sorry your pilgrimage will be all for noth-

ing," she answers, laughing. "I cannot tell the Daisy's fortune; I am not an oracle."

She is looking so charming this morning that a man might be excused for consulting her as an oracle though he had not a grain of superstition in his make-up. She is all in white, from the crown of her sailor hat with two white wings outspread upon it, to the soles of her white canvas ties; and the bunch of daisies stuck in her belt is of the same hue. It is on these daisies that Hastings' critical eyes, after taking in admiringly her *tout ensemble*, rest with particular interest, for he wonders if she has chosen to wear them in honor of the Daisy, or just by mere chance.

"Though you are not an oracle, you can tell the Daisy's fortune with a daisy if you will," he says, smiling. "It does not take an oracle to tell a fortune that way, and it is very fitting that the Daisy's destiny be told with a daisy."

"True, I never thought of that!" Marygold exclaims, unable to make any excuse this time, and drawing a daisy from the bunch with as good grace as possible, she begins pulling off the petals, one by one, pronouncing as she does so an improvised version of the well-known rigmarole, "You will win; you will

not—you will win; you will not,” and so on to the last petal, which falls at “you will win.” Whereupon Hastings expresses as much satisfaction and delight as if the daisy were an oracle indeed, and he had not the smallest doubt its prediction would come to pass.

The duke has been an interested spectator of this little performance, from which Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice have tried in vain to distract his attention.

“Will you tell the Lore Lei’s fortune now, Miss Dare?” he asks, smiling.

“Why, what’s the use, St. Bride, she has told it. If the Daisy’s to win, the Lore Lei has to lose,” Bertram remarks, with a grin.

“But I am not sure yet that the Daisy will win—a daisy is not infallible,” St. Bride answers, laughing. “If another daisy should tell the Lore Lei the same good fortune, it will prove that a daisy’s prediction amounts to nothing; but if it should say the Lore Lei will *not* win, then I will accept its decision as if it were as sure as is the decree of fate. Do you not agree with me, Miss Dare?”

Thus appealed to, what can Marygold do but assent—it is so hard to keep on the armor of haughty reserve with one whose frank friendliness disarms all

hostilities, though if she met the basilisk glance Mrs. Castleton darts at her at this moment, she would not suffer even this brief truce. But intent upon pulling another daisy to pieces she is blissfully oblivious of it.

"You will win; you will not—you will win; you will not," she repeats the same as before, but not with the same result, for this time the last petal drops at "you will *not* win."

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she exclaims involuntarily.

No sooner have these words escaped her lips than, as if some spell that had bound her were broken, she is recalled to herself. She colors vividly and bites her lips with vexation, wishing she had died rather than that they had ever passed them. But there is no help for it! They are said and cannot be unsaid; all she can do is to look as if she didn't mean them—as if they were just an expression of common politeness, and meant nothing.

This would have accomplished her purpose and no one thought anything of her exclamation, but for Bertram, who with his customary thoughtlessness, or rather de'ilishness, will not let it pass without calling attention to it.

"Sorry!" he echoes derisively. "I thought you wanted the Daisy to win!"

"I don't know that I have said that I don't," Marygold answers in as *nonchalant* a tone as she can command.

"Well, to say that you're sorry to have the Lore Lei lose, looks very much like it," he retorts provokingly.

"Bertram, a generous person can feel sorry for the vanquished even though they rejoice with the victor," the duke here remarks carelessly, without looking at Marygold.

Hastings, who is far from relishing the conversation, but wears his inscrutable expression which is a mask to his feelings none can penetrate, smiles a little under his mustache at this remark of the duke's, not as if it pleases him but as if it very much amuses him.

"Then I'm very ungenerous," Bertram says, unabashed, "for I never feel sorry for the vanquished—he had as good a chance as the victor, I reason, it's his own fault if he misses it—especially if I have any money on the victor, as I have in this case. Oh, my! won't I be richer when the race is over than I am now! Perhaps, Marygold, I'll be able to get you that

pearl necklace honestly after all," he adds in a stage whisper, to the mystification of all who overhear him except apparently the duke, who, to Marygold's surprise, smiles as if he had heard about that necklace affair. She had almost forgotten it. Could Bertram have made a confidant of him?

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Bertram," Mrs. Castleton remarks, in tones calculated to dampen his ardor. "Only children put any faith in the prognostication of a daisy. I am surprised, Marygold, that you would be so undignified as to have recourse to such a childish thing."

"Look out, mother; you're treading on delicate ground," the irrepressible Bertram says with a grin. "It was Hastings who proposed having recourse to a daisy, and St. Bride seconded the motion, which proves both of them put faith in its prognostication. Do you call them children?—mighty precocious ones, I should say!"

"Yes, Mrs. Castleton, you must pour out the vials of your contempt upon me. I asked Miss Dare to tell the Daisy's fortune with a daisy," Hastings says with a short, rather bitter laugh, as if to say, "What a fool I was!"

"And as a conspirator in the crime, I must come in for a share of the punishment," the duke says with mock solemnity.

Mrs. Castleton smiles her very sweetest.

"I cannot now think of a punishment that will 'fit the crime,' but 'my object all sublime,' will be to find one," she says playfully—but the look she darts at Bertram is anything but playful.

But it does not quench that quenchless youth.

"Don't worry about that, mother; there's punishment enough in store for them," he remarks cheerfully. "St. Bride's punishment will be his defeat in the coming race, and Hastings' will be his enforced banishment during it from Marygold's society—while I'm left to enjoy it! By the way, hadn't you fellows better be making yourselves scarce if we're going to have any race to-day?"

"You are in a hurry to have us punished," laughs the duke.

"Rather he is in a hurry to get us out of the way that he may have as long a *tête-à-tête* as possible with Miss Dare—very disinterested advice indeed!" Hastings exclaims, intent upon dissembling his ill humor.

But a consultation of their watches shows that,

whether his advice is disinterested or not, they will have to follow it. So after a few minutes more of *badinage* they go down to the waiting boats and are rowed over to their respective yachts.

CHAPTER XI.

FIVE minutes later a gun booms across the water, which is the signal for the yachts to get in position for the race. The marquee is a swarm of waving handkerchiefs, and the band plays "Over the bright blue sea," as they tack out to the starting place, and then every one listens breathlessly for the report of the second gun, which will be the signal for the race to begin. Boom! it sounds across the water, and all give a little jump, while the two graceful vessels bound forward as if eager for the fray! Owing to some fumbling of the sails on the Daisy at the start, she is thrown back a little, and the Lore Lei gets the lead, and to the exultation of Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice and nearly all their guests, whose sympathies like theirs are with the English yacht, she holds it bravely for the first half of the race—that is, until half of the course marked out for them is gone over, and

the point reached where the turn is made for the home run.

She makes it three minutes ahead of the Daisy, and appears about a hundred feet in advance of her rival when that yacht reaches it after much hard work. At this thrilling juncture for the Lore Lei's backers, the men shout themselves hoarse, and wave their handkerchiefs, which they have tied to the end of their sticks, wildly in the air, and the ladies are hardly less demonstrative; while the band, catching the enthusiasm, strikes up a triumphal march as if already victory were assured to the Lore Lei.

"What does it mean?" Marygold queries of Bertram, who is standing behind her chair, viewing the race through his mother's opera-glasses, and to her surprise seems in no wise cast down by the way it is going. "I thought you said the Daisy could beat any boat afloat! The Lore Lei is just walking away from her."

"Just you keep a sharp lookout and you'll see the Daisy walking away from her in a couple more minutes—and hear those idiots change their tune," he replies confidently. "This isn't Daisy weather, that's all it means. She is a much lighter built boat than

the Lore Lei, and can't hold her own so well against the wind. But from now on she'll have the wind with her, and then you'll see what she can do!"

Marygold follows his advice and concentrates all her attention upon the Daisy, and presently she sees the sailors begin scurrying about her deck, evidently intent upon making some change in the rigging of her sails.

"Look at Hastings and you'll see I'm right!" Bertram exclaims excitedly, passing Marygold the glasses. "He's going to make up for lost time now. See! he's giving his men orders to hoist the topsail and jib that ten minutes ago he had hauled in because with the wind against them all sail only retarded their progress. But I tell you! it's pretty risky business with the wind blowing as hard as it is now. It's risen considerably since the start, and is increasing every minute. Hastings is a plucky chap! Whew! d'y'see that?" he ejaculates as the Daisy with all sails set swings round into the wind, and bows under the tremendous pressure until her bowsprit dips the water. But the next instant she rights herself, and bounds off after the Lore Lei like a hound in sight of the hare. Now she is at her heels! Now she is abreast of her!

"Hurrah! hurrah!" yells Bertram at the top of his voice, fairly wild with excitement, waving his arms in the air until he looks like an animated windmill, and Marygold, her enthusiasm also enkindled, echoes his hurrah and waves her handkerchief with all her might.

It is their turn to be exultant. An anxious silence has fallen upon the others, and even the band, as if feeling its music would jar upon the majority of its auditors in such a moment of suspense, keeps silence also.

"Didn't I tell you they'd change their tune?" cries Bertram triumphantly.

"Perhaps we had better not be so triumphant until we're sure of the Daisy's victory," Marygold laughs. "Though she has overtaken the Lore Lei the latter yacht is holding her own still. Wouldn't it be funny if they both reached the goal at the same time!"

It now looks to the observers from the marquee as if this might be the case, for it is evident the yachts are speeding along exactly abreast of each other. It does not appear as if either of them has so much as a yard's advantage over the other, and every one fol-

lows their progress with breathless suspense, for the race is nearing its culmination now—there is less than a quarter of the course between the yachts and their goal, the starting point.

What a stirring sight it is! The increased wind has roughened the water considerably—as far out as the eye can see the waves are crested with white-caps—making it pretty hard sailing for the yachts, yet they never falter, but dash forward gallantly in their course, tossing the spray high over their prows—which falling looks in the sunlight like a shower of diamonds—and cutting a wide foam-ridged swath in the water behind them.

For several minutes they bowl along thus merrily, still abreast of each other, but at last the constantly increasing roughness of the water begins to tell on the Lore Lei, and presently Marygold's straining eyes see the Daisy begin slowly but surely to gain upon her rival, and a triumphant yell from Bertram, who holds the glass, tells her this is no optical illusion.

And now that the Daisy has taken the lead she keeps it, to the intense chagrin and dismay, when they note how dangerously near the goal is, of the Lore Lei's backers.

"What the deuce is the duke thinking of that he don't hoist all sail as Hastings has, and save the day for us—there's yet time! If the Daisy can stand it in this gale, the Lore Lei can, that's certain; she is a much tighter built boat than the Daisy," angrily exclaims a man who is one of a group of men standing near where Marygold is seated. Mrs. Castleton, too, is seated within hearing distance of him.

"That chump's lost his temper because he knows he's going to lose the money he's put on the Lore Lei," Bertram observes *sotto voce* to Marygold.

"Perhaps his grace is superstitious, and thinks there's no earthly use fighting against fate, doncher know. I heard Miss Dare predict he would lose the race," drawls Sir Reggie Montjoy with an admiring look at Marygold, whom he has been ogling through his monocle all morning, and trying to induce his satellite, Cholmondeley Smytherston-Smythers—who stands in mortal terror of the heiress—to introduce him to her; but Marygold with Bertram's ready assistance has succeeded in outwitting all his maneuvers to this end.

"He! he!" laughs "Chappie," but rather feebly, for while he makes a point of applauding all Sir Reg-

gie's remarks, and so can make no exception to this one, lest it displease him, he sees from the expression of his hostess' face, that he has learned to watch closely, that for some reason it does not amuse her; and as he does not wish to displease her any more than Sir Reggie, he does not dare to be too hearty in his applause of the latter's wit.

"If the duke's that superstitious he ought to have told us before the race came off," the first speaker says, contemptuously. "I wouldn't have put a cent on his yacht if I'd known he was going to let the victory slip through his fingers in this way."

At this moment Mrs. Castleton, unable to longer conceal her annoyance, faces about on the disputants, somewhat to their discomfiture, for, with the exception of Smytherston-Smythers, they did not think she could hear them.

"Do you not think it is just a little unmanly, Mr. Eliot, to cry before you are hurt?" she asks, addressing the last speaker in her very blindest tones. "The Lore Lei has not yet lost the race, so we have not yet lost our money, and even if we do in the end—why, such are the chances of war! It will be lost in a good cause. And as to the supposition of Sir Reginald

Montjoy" (casting a not very amiable glance in that gentleman's direction), "that the duke is superstitious and perhaps thinks there is no averting the bad fortune told his yacht—it is very silly to take it seriously, for I am sure he could only have meant it in jest, perhaps to ridicule the fortune-teller."

"Aw—by no means, Mrs. Castleton. I aw—would not presume to ridicule your niece. I—aw—only meant what was complimentary to her—that perhaps the duke in deference to her prediction, though it meant bad luck for him, would not do anything to circumvent it, doncher know," Sir Reggie exclaims hastily, in considerable perturbation, for he thinks from her unamiable glance at him that she is angry with him, thinking he *has* so presumed, for he does not know what little love is lost between aunt and niece, as the people staying at "The Castle" have the chance of seeing, and he cannot think she would prefer his ridiculing the heiress to his presupposing that the duke felt any "deference" for her. Nor is his perturbation solely on this account—he is alarmed lest the heiress may have misunderstood him as well as her aunt, and he wishes to clear himself in her eyes even more than Mrs. Castleton's.

Marygold feigns to be so absorbed in watching the race as not to hear what is passing behind her, but not so Bertram, who, no matter how his eyes may be employed, always keeps his ears—which, by the way, are very good-sized ones—open for all that is going on around him, whether it is intended for them or not.

“What a jay that Montjoy is,” he observes in subdued tones to Marygold, keeping his eyes fixed on the yachts so that no one would believe he was not talking about them, “if he really thinks a fellow would be such a fool as not to try to win a race just because a girl told him he would lose it, no matter what his feelings were for her. And the *mater* is just as foolish to pay any attention to him; it shows she fears there may be ground for his surmises. St. Bride wouldn’t be such a fool, if there are other fellows that would. Not that he don’t think anything of you, but he’d show his regard in some other way. And I think I ought to know whereof I speak better than either Montjoy or the *mater*. St. Bride makes pretty much of a confidant of me.”

“You mean you make pretty much of a confidant of him,” Marygold says quickly, as she recollects the

duke's look at the mention of the necklace. "From the way he looked when you mentioned those pearls I could tell you had told him about them, for all you had given me your solemn promise never to mention my name to him. You could not speak about them without bringing me into the conversation."

"Well, it's all your own fault if I did," he retorts. "If you had taken them as I wanted you to, and not kicked up such a row about nothing, that would have been the end of it. As it was, of course I had to give them back to him."

"What—do—you—mean?" Marygold cries in awful tones, turning sharply upon him, and probing him through and through with blazing eyes; for a terrible suspicion suddenly dawns upon her.

"Oh, Lord! now I've done it!" groans Bertram.

"What—do—you—mean?" she repeats inexorably, still nailing him with her eyes.

"Don't look at me like that or I can never tell you; you paralyze me!" he cries. "Anyway I don't know if I can tell you; I am under oath not to. True, that was if you kept the pearls—you didn't, so perhaps that absolves me from my oath. If not, you'll have to answer for making me break it. So, then, here

goes: You know the day we had our tiff the evening of which I showed you the pearls (just a week ago, isn't it?)—well, you remember I was away all afternoon; I went to New York with St. Bride on the Lore Lei. He saw I was upset about something—perhaps he guessed what—and said he'd give me such a good time I would forget it. You bet he did! we had a regular picnic. He got me a lunch at Delmonico's fit for a king—my mouth waters now only to think of it! Afterward, in the course of our ramblings we passed Tiffany's. Without a word about what he was going to do, he went in, telling me to wait outside—he would be back in a minute. *When he came back he had those pearls—he had bought them for me to give to you as a peace offering.*”

For ten seconds Marygold is silent from sheer inability to get her breath to say anything. Then she bursts into a derisive laugh.

“I suppose you expect me to believe that fiction, don't you!” she exclaims scornfully. “I'd as soon believe the mermaids gave them to you, as you told me first—one story is as likely as the other. Really, Bertie, you'll have to try again.”

“Oh, you can believe it or not as you like—it's true

as gospel all the same," he replies coolly. "You'd like to believe it, I know! You think it's too good to be true, that's what's the matter with you. I suppose you think I can't see which way the winds blowing! I see which way it's blowing St. Bride, and which way it's blowing you—though you're fighting so hard against it. I'm not as blind as you think—as a friend of mine says: 'I've a good eye—I can see a church by daylight.'"

"What do you mean—Shakespeare said that!" Marygold exclaims, anxious to change the subject.

"Well, and isn't Shakespeare a friend of mine and yours, and every man, woman, and child?" Bertram asks sagely.

"Yes, after you've made his acquaintance, but I did not think you had—in fact, I didn't think you had ever even heard of him," she answers provokingly.

"Didn't you? Well, there are a good many things you don't think—now, for instance, you don't think I know you're trying to switch me on to another track—which shows you think the one I'm on is dangerous—for you," he retorts.

To Marygold's intense relief, at this moment a gen-

eral exclamation from the people around them that is almost a groan on the part of some of the men—and decidedly so on the part of Mr. Eliot—effectually distracts his attention from the subject.

In the interest of their conversation they have forgotten the race—at least, they have forgotten to keep their attention fixed upon the yachts, and when they now turn to look at them to see what's the matter, the sight they behold almost causes Bertram to "jump out of his skin," as he himself characteristically expresses it when he returns to his normal condition, for the Daisy has reached the goal—she is just crossing the starting line, her defeated rival more than her length behind her.

"Hip, hip, hurrah! she's won!" yells Bertram so loudly that Hastings on the Daisy hears and lifts his cap in acknowledgment.

But Bertram is not content with this expression of his exultation. Seizing a tin trumpet he has had in readiness for the occasion, he proceeds to make up for the lack of rejoicing among the other occupants of the marquee by awakening pandemonium with his shrill blasts upon it.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN fifteen minutes later Hastings enters the marquee, having rowed over from the Daisy as soon as he could possibly leave her, the band strikes up "Hail! The conquering hero comes," as instructed by Mrs. Castleton, who, though she does not feel like congratulating Hastings, is too much of a society woman to let him see this, and all her guests, being of the same stamp, follow her lead. The only one who does not press forward to congratulate him is she whose congratulations he only cares for of course, Marygold. Not all Bertram's persuasions can make her leave her seat and join the circle about the "conquering hero."

"I'm not a hero worshiper," she says coolly. "Besides, it's not Hastings who has won the race but the Daisy. I'll give her all the praise she deserves."

"What nonsense! Hastings is her owner, and it is owing to his splendid sailing that she has won it,"

Bertram exclaims impatiently. "He'll think you're sorry she did win, and that the Lore Lei lost."

"I don't care what he thinks," she retorts, but her color deepens as if this chance shot had hit the truth—and truly, it came pretty near it, for though she feels proud of the victory of the American yacht, the thought that it belongs to Hastings somewhat dampens her enthusiasm, for she cannot feel half so glad that he has won as she feels sorry that St. Bride has been defeated—only, of course, because he has been defeated, she hastens to assure herself; she would feel sorry even for Hastings under those circumstances. Her sympathies are always more with the vanquished than the victorious. "If Hastings wants my congratulations very badly he can come and get them," she says conclusively.

He does come just as soon as he can break through the circle surrounding him, concealing the annoyance he feels at Marygold's apparent indifference to his success under the utmost suavity of manner.

"The Daisy owes her victory to you, fair oracle, and I have come to lay it at your feet," he says, bowing profoundly.

"Indeed! and here has Bertram been telling me she

owes it to you, and I was just going to congratulate you," Marygold returns with mock gravity. "Now, instead, I must congratulate myself!"

"Nevertheless, as owner of the yacht to which you brought such good fortune, I am to be congratulated indeed!" Hastings exclaims, laughing.

The duke has come over from the Lore Lei by this time, and no sooner does he set foot within the marquee than his admirers crowd about him, anxious to let him see that he has not lost any of their admiration because he has lost the race—a duke would be an object of admiration to some people, though he lost everything he possessed in this world—and his chance of possessing anything in the next—except his title. Only Mr. Eliot hangs back, refusing to forgive the injury he considers the duke has done him in losing the race, and thereby making him lose his money.

Presently St. Bride's glance wanders around as if in search of some one, and when it alights on the little group of three, consisting of Marygold, Bertram and Hastings, he immediately approaches them, and extending his hand to Hastings, congratulates him heartily on the victory of his yacht. It is evident that he is not the least bit chagrined or annoyed

at the defeat of his own yacht, and Hastings looks just a little annoyed to think he will not give him this much advantage. But none of his annoyance is apparent as he thanks him, and, determined not to be outshone before Marygold in generosity, remarks that if he had run the Lore Lei under all sail as he had the Daisy, the result of the race might have been different.

“Perhaps you are right, but it was not to be,” St. Bride says, laughing. “The captain attempted to hoist the topsail—did you not notice?—but it was awkward work with such a hurricane playing in the rigging, and somehow the ropes became inextricably tangled and we had to cut it down. Fate was against us, you see. The oracle had pronounced our doom” (making a smiling obeisance to Marygold). “I am not at all surprised that the Lore Lei lost—I would have been very much surprised if she had won.”

Marygold is about to retort to this half-gallant, half-teasing speech when the recollection of the story of the pearls told her by Bertram (that, though she so much derided it to him, in her heart of hearts she believes every word of—because she wants to), for a moment forgotten, sweeps over her, making her

feel strangely confused and tongue-tied, and all she can do is drop her eyes and blush. Whereupon the consciousness that Hastings is regarding her relentlessly increases her confusion and makes her blush the more.

She is inexpressibly thankful, therefore, that the summons to lunch at this moment breaks upon their ears, and she obeys it with an alacrity that would make one who was not sharp enough to see any other cause for her haste think she was positively famished.

After lunch she manages to elude both Hastings' and Bertram's vigilance, and taking Czar with her, escapes to a small pavilion overhanging the cliffs at the extreme north end of "The Castle" grounds.

But Bertram, knowing this is a favorite retreat of hers, is not long in finding her out. She has just seated herself comfortably on the bench running round the sides of the pavilion, her elbow resting on the back, her hand supporting her head as she gazes dreamily out to sea, while with the other hand she absently strokes Czar's fine head that rests on her knee (it is not often Czar gets his mistress to himself these days, and he is determined to make the most of his good fortune), when a well-known voice breaks in

upon her reverie by exclaiming, "Hello, star-gazing as usual! What are you hiding here for?" and turning her eyes from the sea, she beholds Bertram standing at the entrance of her retreat looking in upon her.

"There are no stars to gaze at that I perceive, and if I am hiding—which I am *not*—I don't see that it is any business of yours," she replies rather tartly, not a little put out at being so soon discovered.

"Now I know you are hiding from some one or you wouldn't be so touchy on the subject," he retorts provokingly, "and I can guess who you're hiding from—it's Hastings, and mighty mean of you it is to dash his triumph so. You know he don't care a rap for his victory if you don't, and you're acting just as if you didn't. I don't see how you can be so hard on him. Granting he deserves it, I should think the consciousness that he loves you would cancel some of his faults in your estimation, as it would in that of any other girl in your place, and you would at least pity him. You see I can sympathize with him because you're as hard on me. I tell you, you've got a great deal to answer for, Marygold. I wonder you can sleep at nights!—you couldn't if you weren't heartless."

"And if you weren't both of you too worthless to trouble myself about," Marygold replies, heartlessly enough. "You give me about as much thought as you do the cut of your coat or the shade of your tie; and Hastings gives my reputed millions so much of his affections that there is little left for me."

"That's a cruel speech, Marygold," Bertram says in his most injured tone. "You know well I wouldn't wear a coat or tie either if you didn't want me to—if I didn't know you'd be the first one to cut me if I appeared in your presence without them. And though you may be right about Hastings, why, blasted ambition is almost as hard to bear as blasted affection, so in either case he deserves to be pitied. But if you won't pity him I won't either—Heaven knows! I've enough to do to pity myself."

"Don't waste your pity on such a worthless object," is Marygold's unfeeling retort to this feeling speech.

At this moment steps sound on the gravel path without the pavilion. Czar raises his head and sniffs the air uneasily, and he looks anything but pleased when Hastings appears at the entrance, for he has never forgotten the circumstances attendant upon his first meeting with that gentleman. It was on the day

Marygold first made Hastings' acquaintance three summers ago. He was walking beside her, when Czar, who was younger then and more playful, came bounding toward them. Hastings did not know he was her dog then, and seeing this huge mastiff approaching them apparently so ferociously, he became alarmed, and before Marygold could say a word, he raised his walking-stick and dealt Czar a heavy blow on his head that almost stunned him. Immediately the dog's playfulness turned to anger—only once before, the time of his encounter with the tramp, had Marygold ever seen him so aroused—he uttered an ugly growl, and had not Marygold been there to speak to him and hold him back by main force from springing on Hastings, undoubtedly something dreadful would have happened. She could not blame Hastings, for he had administered the blow more with the thought of defending her than himself. She never refers to the affair and he apparently has forgotten it, but she knows Czar has not, and sobered down though he is by increased years, he is always a little restive in Hastings' presence, and determinedly resists all his efforts to make friends.

Marygold looks a trifle guilty at sight of Hastings,

whose face is as black as a thundercloud. Perhaps he thinks, even as Bertram does, that she has sought this retreat to avoid him. It is her consciousness that makes her look guilty.

"I have been looking for you the last half-hour, Miss Dare," he says in a constrained voice. "I could not leave without saying good-by to you."

"I don't see why not—I can assure you I would not have felt in the least slighted," Marygold thinks to herself. But aloud she says sweetly, and with the most innocent expression imaginable, "I did not think you would be going so early."

Bertram is suddenly seized with a fit of coughing that threatens to choke him, nor is Hastings taken in by this polite fiction.

"It is not early," he says a trifle dryly. "I am about the only guest that hasn't gone."

"Indeed!" Marygold exclaims in tones of artless surprise, "I had no idea I had been here so long. I must return to the house immediately," and she rises as she speaks, for her favorite retreat has no charm for her with Bertram and Hastings to share it with her.

Leaving the pavilion, she turns her steps toward the

house, Bertram on one side of her rattling off all sort of nonsense at the rate of almost six words a second; Hastings on the other hardly opening his lips; and Czar majestically bringing up the rear.

As they approach the terrace they behold Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice and their guests constituting the house party—all those of the day having taken their departure save Hastings—standing on the terrace. Before it on the drive, a natty dogcart to which is hitched a high-stepping thoroughbred, that it is as much as the groom at his head can do to hold—is waiting for some one.

“There is my trap—I must be off!” Hastings exclaims at sight of it. Then turning to Marygold he murmurs in a voice too low, as he thinks, to be caught by Bertram’s attentive ears, “You have spoiled the day for me, Miss Dare. What is the Daisy’s victory to me if it is nothing to you? Will you spoil the night, also, or will you make it the happiest of my life by opening the dance with me—you know, the owner of the victorious yacht was to open it—at the club to-night.”

By what right does he speak in such an extravagant way? is Marygold’s mental comment on this speech.

She has certainly never given him the right, and she most assuredly will not now by granting his request. Why, all Bluepoint would have her engaged to him were she to open this affair at his club with him.

"I do not intend to go to the dance to-night," she answers a little haughtily. Up to this moment she has had no intention of not going—it is the only way she can see of getting out of dancing with him now that he has asked her.

At her words Hastings pales like a man who has received a blow, and his lips close tightly together as if to keep back the passionate words that rush to them. Then in tragic silence he strides over to his trap, and springing into it seizes the reins, and bending forward gives his horse a lash with the whip in which he vents on the unoffending animal his pent-up rage toward Marygold. The astonished groom is almost knocked down, and barely manages to scramble up into his perch behind his irate master, for the spirited thoroughbred, smarting under the unexpected blow, rears and plunges in a way that almost upsets the high trap and then dashes off furiously down the drive.

"It looks very much as if he wouldn't go to the

dance, either," Bertram chuckles in fiendish delight. "If that horse lets him off with his life, he looks in a humor to put an end to it himself."

Of course, the people on the terrace have witnessed this scene. They can tell something has gone wrong with Hastings, and all eyes watch Marygold curiously—with the exception of the Duke of St. Bride's, which are invisible as he is bending down to pet Czar, who walked up to him as soon as he caught sight of him, for Czar and the duke have been fast friends ever since the night they made each other's acquaintance. But not for an instant does she falter under their fire. She only holds her chin a little higher and walks with her proudest mien.

"Where have you been all this time?" Beatrice asks inquisitively.

"And what have you done to poor Mr. Hastings to make him go off in such a huff?" pipes in Rosalie Ralston, as much to plague her "darling Bee" as Marygold, for she knows Beatrice, taken up though she is with trying to capture the duke, hates to be reminded of her failure to secure Hastings by any allusion to his being captive to Marygold.

"If I have done anything to him—which is not say-

ing that I have—I don't see that it is any business of yours," Marygold answers haughtily.

"*Ma chère*, I should think you would sometimes try to answer a civil question civilly, and not always be so disagreeable," Mrs. Castleton remarks reprovingly.

"Mother, there's no use of appealing to Marygold on the score of her being disagreeable," Bertram here breaks in. "Don't you know that the secret of her being so agreeable is that she does not care a button whether she is disagreeable or not? It's your perpetually agreeable people who are always disagreeable in my eyes."

Bertram delivers himself of this absurd paradox with an air of profound wisdom.

The Duke of St. Bride laughs heartily, and Marygold tries to laugh, too, as if she thought Bertram might be only jesting, but his mother smiles sarcastically.

"It's well, Bertram, that nobody sees with your eyes but yourself," she remarks dryly.

But Bertram, nothing daunted, grins in his most exasperating way.

"There are a good many see what I see, though

they don't see with my eyes," he says, with a chuckle; "don't you think so, St. Bride?"

Marygold does not wait to hear what the duke answers, but beats a precipitous retreat into the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE morning several days later Bertram asks Marygold to accompany him to the stables, there being a new horse he wishes her to see, and as she loves horses far more than most people at this stage in her life, and is always glad to make a new acquaintance among the former which cannot be said in regard to the latter, she accepts his invitation with pleasure.

She finds this addition to her old friends in the stable as fine a specimen of horseflesh as she has ever seen. He is a splendid black animal, and she notes his small, graceful head, his erect, sensitive ears, his quivering, delicate limbs; and his coat, as smooth and glossy as a piece of black satin, and without a white hair in it. She falls in love with him at first sight, as is her wont whenever she sees a horse that deserves the honor.

“He is a veritable ‘Black Beauty!’” she exclaims

rapturously. "To whom does he belong, Bertie? Don't tell me to *you!*"

"Why not?" he asks, evading her question.

"For a very good reason—you will never be able to ride him," she answers.

"Well, that's not so much to my discredit as you think; he's got the devil in him—you couldn't, either," he retorts provokingly, chuckling in appreciation of some joke that Marygold cannot see—but she does later, to her sorrow.

He knows she will never submit to a slur upon her horsemanship; it is the one thing she prides herself upon, and with reason—it would be strange if, loving horses as she does, she could not master them.

"Couldn't I," she says, trying to speak coolly, but beginning to feel a little excited as she eyes the black beauty over, for she secretly acknowledges he is the most formidable-looking animal she has ever tackled; "that's how much you know about it!"

"I dare you to!" Bertram exclaims, beginning fairly to dance in delight at the prospect of the circus he expects to witness. He has no sense of danger whatever, not because he is so brave, but because he is so senseless, and even with Marygold, whom he professes

to think so much of, he cannot comprehend the risk she will run if she is foolish enough to pay any attention to his dare.

And she is just that venturesome. She will never "take a dare," as the saying is, lest she rest under the imputation of being a coward, and therein she is almost as senseless as Bertram, for in trying to show she is not a physical coward she proves herself a moral one. But in this instance she has really entered into the spirit of the thing. She longs to be seated on the back of this magnificent animal—though how long she will stay there will probably depend upon the animal and not herself. Notwithstanding which she calls out boldly—happy in the consciousness of triumphing over Bertram—to a groom whom she recognizes:

"Jenkins, bring me a side-saddle, I'm going to ride this horse. What's his name?" she adds, turning to Bertram, who can hardly wait for the show he is promising himself to begin.

"Lucifer—don't he look it!" he exclaims admiringly, and in her heart Marygold confesses that he does, for she sees now what she did not see at first. He is in a box stall and seeming to comprehend by

this time that he is under inspection, and wishing to return the compliment, he faces around, and walks to the front of the stall where Bertram and Marygold are standing by the door, over which he puts his head, and Marygold can see his eyes. It is by the eyes of a horse that you can generally tell his disposition, and Lucifer's are large, black and brilliant, but very shifting and unsteady, and they seem to emit sparks of fire as they glance restlessly around.

"He certainly has the evil-eye," thinks Marygold, "but perhaps I can exorcise the devil in him," and she puts out her hand to caress his black, velvety muzzle, with its proudly dilated nostrils.

The wicked Lucifer holds quite still until her hand has almost touched his nose, then he throws up his head with a snort and shows two rows of gleaming white teeth.

Bertram throws himself on a pile of hay and rolls over and over in a paroxysm of laughter at sight of Marygold's expression of chagrin and dismay. She has never had a horse treat her so before.

"What a pity so fine-looking an animal should have so vicious a temper," she remarks, trying to speak quite composedly, but in spite of herself her voice is

a little unsteady, and her cheeks a shade paler than usual, for there is a dire misgiving at her heart.

How she wishes she had paid no attention to Bertram's silly dare, but since she has she is far too proud to give in, and soon her native courage, where horses are concerned, returns to her. After all, once on his back may she not master him as she has every other horse she has ever ridden? He will not be able to throw her (she can cling like a cowboy to a horse's back), so all she will have to do is just stick to him until he is tired out. But what if she is tired out first—what will happen then?

The groom whom she ordered to bring a saddle stared in amazement when she indicated the horse she intended to ride, and seemed about to speak, but Bertram tipped him a wink, that Marygold did not see, admonishing him to hold his tongue and not spoil the fun. So in silence he now approaches with a saddle and bridle.

But it is one thing to bring them to the horse and another to put them on him. Lucifer does not seem inclined to second Marygold in her rash undertaking.

But Jenkins is master of the situation. He is an Englishman (as are all the men servants about "The

Castle," with the exception of Sambo, the porter, who is a Virginia darkey as black as ever was made), and is a well-trained groom in the fullest English sense of the word, which is the highest recommendation that can be given him. Even Marygold allows that Englishmen, from the lord to the groom, show brains in their knowledge of horse flesh, if they do in nothing else—she will give the devil his due!

So Lucifer finds Jenkins is not to be trifled with, and submits to be saddled and bridled with as good grace as possible, after which the groom leads him out of the stable, curveting and prancing around him, but looking so handsome that Marygold forgets all her fears in her admiration.

And then he is led to the horse-block. It is easy enough to mount him while Jenkins holds his head, and take the reins and crop in her hand, for Lucifer for several seconds stands quite still, as if petrified with astonishment that any one would dare to take such a liberty with him.

But Marygold is deceived into thinking his quietness is proof that he knows how to behave himself at the proper time, and she wishes, now that she is on his back, that she had her riding habit on. She has

intended only to canter once or twice around the stable yard just to prove to Bertram that she can, and she would not don her habit for such a trifle, but when she finds Lucifer is so well trained, apparently, to the saddle, she thinks how delightful it would be, had she on the proper gown, to take a long ride this fine morning.

"He is not vicious, after all, only playful," she says to herself with a long breath of relief.

But she is soon undeceived. She has hardly so congratulated herself, and the groom taken his hand off the bridle and stepped back, than Lucifer rears on his hind legs, and for several seconds stands almost perpendicularly, as though trying to dislodge the ridiculous object that has alighted upon his back.

But he does not succeed. Marygold is not to be so shaken off, though how she keeps her seat in the saddle is a miracle. It seems to infuriate Lucifer, and he only comes down to earth again in order to kick out his hind legs in the hope, no doubt, of throwing her over his head, and when he resumes his natural position, he is doubtless greatly astonished to find her still on his back.

This is miracle number two, and it would all be

very funny if it wasn't so very serious. To Bertram, of course, it is only ridiculous and he is roaring with laughter, for, as he says, as soon as he can say anything, they look as if they were playing see-saw; but the groom looks on in consternation, and as to Marygold—she sees she is to have a fierce battle with the frantic brute, a battle perhaps for life or death, and all the dauntless courage she possesses rises to the emergency. She sets her teeth hard and prepares herself for the worst that may happen.

None too soon! Lucifer, balked in these two endeavors to rid himself of her, becomes thoroughly maddened, and after one or two frenzied circles around the stable yard, during which it would have been as much as their lives were worth for Jenkins, or any of the other grooms who have appeared upon the scene by this time, to have attempted to stop him—though they might have risked it had not Marygold peremptorily ordered them to stand back, for she is determined to conquer Lucifer herself—he dashes through the open gate, and out upon the drive where ten minutes ago she was walking unconcernedly with Bertram. That worthy for his part is as unconcerned as ever, having no idea whatever of her danger, for

despite what he says to the contrary to tease Marygold, in his heart of hearts he firmly believes she could conquer the devil himself were his satanic majesty pleased to assume the shape of a horse. Besides which, he is fit for nothing but laughing at the circus that has turned out beyond his wildest expectations.

Mrs. Castleton and Beatrice and their guests are gathered on the tennis-court, past which the drive runs, and as Marygold is borne by her frantic horse within their sight, consternation spreads among the laughing crowd. The ladies shriek with terror, and the gentlemen, dropping their rackets, rush toward the drive, the Duke of St. Bride foremost among them. He has uttered an exclamation Marygold could not hear, and his evident horror convinces the others that her doom is sealed. It is well for her that their alarm and dismay does not infect her—if it did, it would be the death of her. Instead, it rather nerves her to a renewed determination to let them see that she can conquer the devil she is riding, as she is convinced lies in her power, for the fact that he has been unable to throw her fills her with a blind confidence in herself.

It is, therefore, with actual chagrin and even anger

that she sees the Duke of St. Bride spring in front of her horse at the imminent risk of his life, and grasping the bridle with a strength and masterly skill that is marvelous, bring the maddened animal to a halt with such suddenness as to throw him back on his haunches. It is a wonderful exhibition of power and courage, and the onlookers utter a cry of relief that an awful catastrophe, as they think, has been averted.

But it only incenses Marygold—he has conquered, not she—she has only been made to look insignificant!

She does not spring with alacrity from the horse, and pour out her gratitude to her deliverer as every one naturally expects—instead, she settles herself more securely in the saddle, while her fingers tighten in their hold on the rein, and she grasps the crop with almost nervous intensity.

“What do you mean by stopping me!” she exclaims haughtily, though her voice trembles with anger, or something—nervousness, perhaps, for now that the high tension at which her nerves were strung a moment ago is relaxed, they may well tremble. “I intend to conquer this horse. Oblige me by taking your hand from the bridle.”

He stares at her in astonishment. “Is this her

gratitude!" perhaps he thinks, but he only says, quickly: "That is impossible! you cannot ride this horse—he has never been broken to the saddle."

For an instant her heart stands still at the thought of the danger she has run just because Bertram dared her to! The Duke of St. Bride has probably saved her from an awful death, yet not one word of thankfulness has passed her lips. It is only earnestness that makes his manner somewhat peremptory, but in the strange state of irritation that possesses Marygold, she will not see this—she resents it as an impertinence. Because he is a duke he presumes to command *her*—no other man has ever *dared* oppose her will!—and perhaps he thinks she will think herself honored by his taking the trouble! She will teach him his mistake!

"Will you take your hand off the bridle?" she repeats in an ominous tone. It is all she can trust herself to say, for something in her throat chokes her utterance.

"Do not ask me to," he answers quickly, almost beseechingly. He is as pale as she is—indeed, they are both far more tragic than the occasion warrants, and it would seem a strange scene to the spectators

did it not pass far more quickly than it takes to relate it—so quickly that they have not time to realize its strangeness. “I cannot do it,” he continues earnestly, “I cannot let you deliberately run the risk of your life.”

This continued opposition exasperates her beyond endurance. She loses all control of herself—forgets that she is a lady and he a gentleman who has just saved her life perhaps, and is trying still to save her from the consequences of her own mad willfulness. She raises her right hand with the crop tightly clinched in it, and in another moment would have brought it down, with all the force her wretched temper could give it, upon his detaining hand upon the bridle. But at this instant Mrs. Castleton’s voice breaks upon her ears in horrified accents.

“Marygold, Marygold, you forget yourself!” she cries. “The Duke of St. Bride has a perfect right to forbid you to ride his own horse.”

Oh! the shame of this moment—Marygold will never forget it. The blood rushes into her white face and burns there with an intensity that is painful. She could die of rage and mortification—rage with Bertram for the dupe he has made of her in letting

her rest under the impression that Lucifer belonged to him, for if he had told her he was the Duke of St. Bride's horse, nothing in the world could have made her ride him; mortification that by her haughtiness and rudeness to the duke when he was only concerning himself in what was strictly his own business, she has but played into Bertram's hand and added to this joke against herself. In all her life she has never suffered such acute shame as she does in this one moment.

Her upraised arm sinks to her side and the crop falls from her nerveless grasp to the ground. She does not heed the duke when he says in a voice too low to be heard by any one but herself, "I hope you do me the justice to believe, Miss Dare, that I did not give a thought to the horse when I asked you not to ride him," but slipping from the saddle almost mechanically, without paying the least attention to the various remarks and congratulations of the others, walks off toward the house; and not even the laugh that follows her, that is called forth by one of Mrs. Castleton's witty remarks at her expense, has the power to sting her out of the strange quietness that has settled upon her spirits.

CHAPTER XIV.

BERTRAM is the only one to follow her. He is such a good-natured fellow, for all he is such a tease, he means so little harm by his jokes, that he thinks Marygold will take it all in good part when he hails her with, "Well, coz, that was a come-down!" and she does, for though at first she thought herself in a rage with him she cannot long feel that way, for she knows how silly it would be if only for policy's sake. Peace would be a stranger to her for the rest of her days if once Bertram was to think his jokes had the power to "rattle" her!

And what has considerably to do with producing this feeling is the consciousness that the mortification his joke of the morning has occasioned her is a minor consideration compared with an irreparable mischief that she vaguely feels has been done, and that she can hardly call Bertram to account for—another will have to answer for it,

evening. So believing the coast is clear—for the gentlemen generally make themselves invisible at this hour, also, she steals out of her rooms—having already dressed for dinner—and down the stairs, and thence makes her way to the library, for she thinks she will hunt up some entertaining book to read—no matter what, so that it will hold her attention to its pages and divert her mind from the thoughts which have been tormenting her all day.

The library is a somber apartment in the north wing of "The Castle." The hottest day in summer one can keep cool here, for the sun never shines through its high, mullioned windows, only the white north-light, and the cold blue and gray tints it reveals, that prevail in the decoration of the room, give you an impression of chill as you enter. Nevertheless, Marygold has always liked it, and this afternoon it seems to be in sympathy with her mood.

She chooses a book that she has read before, but that does not lessen its charm—a good story bears repetition—and this is the most fascinating she has ever read, and in renewing acquaintance with its characters, who seem like long-lost friends, she is soon charmed as completely as she desired into forgetful-

ness of herself and everything. Seated on the wide ledge of one of the quaint, high windows, that she may catch every ray of the slowly fading light, she reads on spellbound, and does not hear a door open at the far end of the room, or a footfall on the thick carpet—is not conscious of a presence in the room until some one stands before her, when she raises her eyes from her book with a start—to find them encountered by the Duke of St. Bride's.

The book drops to her lap and the blood rushes to her cheeks. What would she not give to be able to run away! But flight is impossible, for he has planted himself squarely before the window on the ledge of which she is curled up like a child—how she wishes she had not chosen this undignified elevation! Does he notice her embarrassment—is he amused at it? What can she say to him to show him she does not care for him? *He* also has probably come to say something about her morning escapade—what else can he have to say to her?—she will let him see that she is not afraid to broach the subject.

“What is it you wish to say to me?” she asks, with just a touch of insolence in her tone. “Have you come to call me to account for my treatment of your

horse? Beatrice has told me how much you paid for him—if you want me to I will write you out a check for the amount, and then if I have done him any harm the loss will be mine, not yours, and what is more, the next time I desire to ride him, I can do so without having you stop me.”

This impertinent speech hurts him deeply—he grows red to the very roots of his hair.

“It is not just for you to taunt me in that way!” he exclaims passionately. “I told you I did not give a thought to the horse when I stopped you. If you will not take my word for it you have proof of it, for surely I would not care more for the animal than my own life, and did I not risk *it* to save yours? This sounds egotistical, but—but—I want to convince you.”

Little does he know how his words thrill her!—little can he guess from *her* next words, for it is because she is afraid lest he may that she speaks them.

“You want to convince me that you have saved my life—that I owe you an eternal debt of gratitude—which you probably think I have set about in a very poor way to pay,” she says scornfully. “Well, let me tell you I do not think you the hero you are in your own estimation. My life was in no danger.

You would not believe me when I told you I could conquer that horse—until I have ridden him again and he has conquered me, I will not believe you.”

This is tantamount to saying that she will never believe him—never acknowledge the great service he has rendered her, for she knows very well she does not intend to ride Lucifer again—to place her life a second time at the mercy of that vicious brute.

Perhaps it is because her taunts are so meaningless, so unmerited, like those of an angry child, that he has the forbearance to make no cutting rejoinder, as he might well do, and as she most certainly deserves. He only says very quietly, without a trace of his former passion:

“I am very sorry, Miss Dare, that you still persist in misunderstanding me. When I saw you enter this room, after some hesitation I intruded upon you in the hope of convincing you of what I told you when you were dismounting from Lucifer this morning, for I knew from your paying no attention to me then that you misconstrued my motive for stopping you. And now I seem to have only made matters worse—to have given you a worse opinion of myself, when I want your good opinion. It seems to me your good

opinion, Miss Dare, when you are so different from every other one I have ever met would be worth more than that of all the world beside. But I will not go on, for I see I only bore you excessively. I suppose you want to continue that book you were reading when I entered—it must be very entertaining; you did not hear me, and I confess I made as little noise as possible, for I did not want to disturb you immediately, you—make such a picture sitting up there on that high window seat. Will you forgive me for having disturbed you at all? Perhaps you will if I make the best amends in my power for my offense by relieving you of my society at once. But before I go won't you say that, though I cannot expect that we are friends yet, we are at least not enemies?"

What makes him talk in this strain? Has she not snubbed him enough—vanity must die hard in English dukes—that he thinks it will please her? Well, she will give the vanity of this particular English duke its death stroke.

"I don't know about that," she answers coolly. "Your ancestors and mine were enemies—why should not we follow in their illustrious footsteps?"

"Is it because I am an Englishman that you dis-

like me so?" he asks eagerly; "or—because I am myself?"

What, has his vanity still life in it! This is the curious view her foolish pride takes of his patience and long-suffering.

"Probably for both reasons," she answers as glibly as though she were not telling a lie, but the golden truth.

This is the second time she has made him grow red.

"Ah! I deserved that," he murmurs contritely enough. "It was very vain of me to think you could like me for either reason."

And then he leaves her to triumph in the consciousness of having "taken all the starch out of him," as Bertram would have said. But is she proud of her victory? The book that was so entertaining lies forgotten in her lap, and presently the tears begin to fall unheeded upon it. Victors do not shed tears—they are the bitter guerdon of the vanquished.

CHAPTER XV.

DAYS are like beads strung by time upon the thread of life, some shining, some dull, that is the only difference between them, until a day comes as different from the one preceding it—as widely separating us, as we were before it, from what we become after—as if an unfathomable ocean had rolled between the past whose shores are “yesterday,” and the present whose shores are “to-day”—an ocean brackish with the salt of many tears, and spanned by a bridge of sighs that trembles beneath the heavy thoughts that throng it.

Marygold has a chance to realize this from the difference this day of her battle with Lucifer and subsequent encounter in the library with his master makes in her life henceforth. It is not only that it changes her attitude toward the duke and his toward her—no longer is she at great pains to show her dislike for him by snubbing remorselessly all his friendly efforts to overcome said dislike, nor does he try to

conciliate her, but both avoid each other studiously—but somehow she seems changed to herself, her thoughts, her feelings, and though she does not ask herself the meaning of this, she is never done marveling at the difference twenty-four hours have made in her—twenty-four years could not have made more! And so taken up is she with marveling that she forgets to rejoice that the duke now knows the utter futility of cherishing any designs of a covetous nature upon her millions.

Meanwhile, though having no heart for them, not wishing any one to know that she hasn't, she enters apparently with unusual zest into the usual round of gayeties that go to make up the season at Bluepoint—which is now at its height. Yachting parties, lawn *fêtes*, riding parties, dancing parties, follow each other in rapid succession, and at length bring round what has been anticipated, by those who live in anticipation of such things as the *pièce de résistance*, so to speak, of the season's feast of pleasure, viz., a *bal masqué*, to which there are half a thousand invitations out, it is rumored.

The lady giving it is Mrs. Farrington, a sister of Clifford Hastings. She is one of the wealthiest of

Bluepoint's society leaders and is noted for her lavish expenditure on her entertainments. It is her wide reputation for brilliant achievements in this line that has caused her masquerade to be looked forward to as *the* function of the season. For days before the papers, not only in Bluepoint, but all over the country, have devoted whole columns to it, each aiming to appear to know more about it than its contemporaries, and nothing else has been thought about or talked about by those fortunate beings who have received invitations—or those *unfortunate* ones who have *not*, but who, thanks to the newspapers, know quite as much about it, and perhaps a little more, than the fortunate elect.

Of course it has been as much the theme of conversation at "The Castle" as elsewhere. The ladies have taken delight in putting their heads together and whispering about the costumes they intend wearing to excite the curiosity of the gentlemen, who, they coquettishly declare, will *never* be able to penetrate their different disguises. Which challenge, of course, the gentlemen feel called upon to take up, each protesting to the object of his particular admiration that he would be able to discover her under twenty dom-

inoes, and among ten thousand people—the infatuated Mr. Tyson seizing the opportunity to murmur sentimentally to Beatrice something about knowing her by her tread, and that his “heart would hear it and beat had it lain for a century dead!” But he is put to confusion by Bertram, who unfortunately for him overhears this lover-like speech, and, evidently thinking the sentiment original, remarks with a grin that it is not a very complimentary one, as it would take a pretty elephantine tread to awake one from the dead. At which everybody laughs, not even excepting Beatrice—to the misery of poor Fitz-Gerald.

Marygold, though she has scarcely given a thought to the ball herself—she has something so much more serious to think about just now—is glad that the others have not been able to consider anything else, as it has kept them from noticing the change aforementioned in her attitude toward the duke and his toward her. But though this is true of her fellow guests she is very much mistaken in thinking anything affecting the relative position of herself and his grace could escape Mrs. Castleton’s watchful eyes. She has grasped the situation from the first, and congratulates herself on the success of her maneuvering. Nor

is Bertram blind to it, though appearing to have eyes for nothing but the costume he will wear to the masquerade, which, in words of his own lingo, will be a "stunner," and in which he is quite as much absorbed as Beatrice is in hers. Talk about (vanity being a peculiarly feminine infirmity! it would be hard to find a being of the feminine gender with more vanity than Bertram). But he does not betray to Marygold that he has seen anything until the afternoon of the day of the ball, when, having succeeded in enticing her out for a drive with him he has her at his mercy, and, taking a mean advantage of her defenseless position, he springs this question upon her:

"What's the matter with you and St. Bride that you shun each other as if one or t'other of you had the plague?"

Marygold cannot help a little start—she has just been congratulating herself that he has not noticed the establishment of the new order of things, and rather wondering that he has not—and the telltale color mounts to her brow, but she is as ready with a retort as usual.

"I don't know that we ever particularly sought each other," she says.

“Well, to be sure you always have treated St. Bride shabbily—though I verily believe it broke your heart to do it—and even a worm will turn!” Bertram exclaims. “I’m real glad his patience is at last exhausted; it’ll teach you you can’t trample on a fellow forever—who knows, even I may turn some day! It’s all along of your treatment of him after rescuing you from Lucifer. When a fellow saves a girl’s life he naturally expects she will at least say ‘thank you,’ while the girl generally feels that from henceforth her rescuer has a mortgage on her affections, if not a clear title to them, and whenever he shall see fit to press his claim, she will acknowledge it with pleasure—especially if he happens to be a fellow like St. Bride. But you—good Lord! I wish you could have seen what a little devil you looked when you raised your crop to strike St. Bride!” (Marygold winces perceptibly.) “That intended blow was quite as effective as if it had fallen. St. Bride was fairly afraid to stay under the same roof with you after that. You may know how he felt about it when his first intention was to leave ‘The Castle’ the very next morning!”

Marygold can only hope that this is an invention of Bertram’s to plague her, but the fear that it may not

be turns her almost faint. Nevertheless, she stands to her guns and retorts bravely:

“What a pity he didn’t carry out his intention.”

“Do you really think so?” Bertram says with a provoking smile, as if he saw behind her defenses and realized the weakness of her position. “Well, he would have but for the *mater*. She apologized elaborately for your rudeness——”

“How dared she!” Marygold blazes out passionately.

“Said she knew he was justified in feeling insulted,” Bertram pursues evenly, not heeding the interruption, “but that he must take in consideration that you really knew no better. He should not judge you by the same high standard that he would—Beatrice for instance; he must remember your bringing up in the wild and woolly West, where, at ten, you had learned to ride mustangs barebacked, and to shoot Injuns for pastime. But this did not make him falter in his resolution to leave—rather, it seemed to make him all the more anxious to get off, no doubt thinking you would be shooting him next; so the *mater* changed her tactics, and asked him if he had forgotten that he was due at Mrs. Farrington’s ball—which lady, she assured him, would be inconsolable if he

threw her over, for she was giving the affair especially in his honor. St. Bride answered that he *had* forgotten the ball—in a tone of voice that said plainly he was thinking only of pistol balls just then—and agreed to stay until the day after it (that's to-morrow, you know); but not without many misgivings, I could tell, when he thought how this would doom him to a week more under the same roof with you (he is doubtless now saying his prayers to think it is almost over and he still alive), and depend upon it, the reason he has shunned you so ever since is because he fears you might at any moment whip out a pistol and demand 'your *horse* or your life!'"

Marygold tries hard to laugh at this nonsense that Bertram may not see how near to crying she is, but the effort is too much for her; the short-lived laugh ends in a sound that is unmistakably a sob, and dropping her face in her hands, she bursts into an hysterical fit of weeping, that she tries in vain to check. It is as if a mountain torrent long frozen up—and in truth she has felt like crying more than once of late, but has always sternly refused herself the luxury of a single tear—had at last burst forth and defied restraint; and she marvels at the violence of her weep-

ing when, as she emphatically assures herself, she has nothing to weep for—it is only Bertram's teasing that has made her nervous. But when did she ever mind Bertram's teasing before? Never!—a voice in her heart answers, which proves that it is not the bare fact of his teasing her, but the cause of it all, that has fretted her so.

They are driving along a lonely, inland lane, so that there is no one but Bertram to see or be amazed at this ebullition of feeling on the part of the heiress. (They are utterly alone, not even having the presence of a groom to be a restraint upon them, for Bertram, intending that their conversation should be of a confidential nature, dispensed with the attendance of one.) Bertram, however, is amazed enough for a dozen people, for he has never seen Marygold give way like this before, and he anathematizes himself for being the cause of it. He is so worked up by the sight of her distress that he seems on the verge of tears himself.

“If I *only* had a pistol here, wouldn't I blow some fellow's brains out who deserves it!” he exclaims in such a seriously regretful tone as he bends forward with a suspiciously red face, pretending to be intent

upon flicking a couple of flies off his brown cob with the whip, that Marygold smiles through her tears.

“Always provided he has any brains to blow out,” she remarks, to revenge herself upon him for making her cry, by showing that if he has made a simpleton of her, she does not think he is any the less of a simpleton himself.

Uncomplimentary as this speech is, Bertram does not resent it. Nothing could please his ears more, for it proves to him that she is herself again—that the world is not coming to an end as he at first thought; and besides, he feels that he deserves anything that she may say about him.

“That’s right, don’t spare me—I’m a brute!” he exclaims. “But I only meant to tease you; you know that, don’t you, Marygold? You know I wouldn’t pain you intentionally for all the world, don’t you, dear?”

At this, all other emotion in Marygold is swallowed up in alarm at hearing Bertram talk in such a serious way. Her one thought now is to prove to him that he has *not* pained her, but she knows she has a very weak case, with all those tears she has shed as a witness against her, so she seeks refuge in a subterfuge.

"Don't let's talk about it any more, Bertram," she says briskly. "I feel awfully ashamed of myself for giving way so, and the worst of it is, I only have myself to blame for it—it would be such a comfort if I could throw the blame on you. But, though your teasing fretted me and undoubtedly produced that climax of all woes feminine, a burst of tears, it was only because my temper was already sorely tried, and my powers of endurance strained to their utmost limit—so that it only needed a straw to break the camel's back!—by (you'll promise never to tell?) my *shoes*—they're pinching me horribly!"

But Bertram is not taken in by this elaborate fabrication, and such is his serious mood it does not even make him smile—"A bad sign," Marygold thinks anxiously. Her fibbing has all been for nothing.

"Why won't you confide in me, Marygold—I could help you," he says with seeming irrelevancy, but his drift is plain enough to Marygold.

"I have nothing to confide," she answers glibly, but her heightened color belies her words.

"Ah, Marygold, as if I couldn't see! Love may be blind, but not to love," he murmurs, looking straight before him.

"Dear me! what *are* you talking about?" she asks, but her cheeks are as red as a rose now.

He smiles at this, but a sad sort of a smile, that makes him look unlike himself somehow, it is so different from his usual mirthful smile.

"If you would only trust me, dear, and let me help you, things would all come straight," he says earnestly. "St. Bride don't know—er—I mean it's all a misunderstanding, but I could explain—why won't you let me? It would be different if I wasn't your cousin—what's the use of having relations if they can't help you! To be sure, relations don't seem of much use but to do harm to each other nowadays! There's the *mater*, for instance—though she's your aunt, she's maneuvered to get you out of Bee's way; and there's Bee, the same relation to you that I am, rejoicing that you are out of her way—(as *she* believes, but *I* think she'll find herself mistaken before long!). But, thank Heaven! I'm not that kind of a relation! I love you and I'm not going to let you make a mess of your life if I can help it—not even to please the *mater* and Beatrice! I can't have you myself—you were right to discourage me as you always have—I know as well as you I am not worthy of you—but I

hope I'm not such a dog in the manger as not to want another fellow to have you—the only fellow I know who is worthy of you.”

Marygold is deeply touched by this speech. She looks at Bertram hardly able to believe he is the same Bertram she has always known—that this earnest young fellow, giving utterance to such generous sentiments, is the thoughtless, if good-natured, boy she has always considered him. She forgets her own feelings as she thinks how she must have hurt his by misjudging him so.

She lays her hand softly upon his arm.

“Dear Bertram,” she says with lips that tremble a little, “you mustn’t speak disparagingly of yourself—you are as worthy of the best girl in the world as the best fellow in the world. If I ever thought otherwise, I know now I did you a great injustice, but I don’t believe I really thought so, I only ‘made believe’ to tease you in revenge for your teasing me so—I’m sure, you’ve often been just as hard on me as I have been on you” (anxiously hoping he has, to ease her conscience). “And whatever I ‘made believe,’ Bertram, I have always cared for you, you must know that, more than any one else in the world—since

papa's death. How could I help it when you are the only one in the whole world I've got to care for, or who cares for me—the only one?"

"Don't—don't—dear!" he cries in husky tones. "I can't bear it!"

"But this I must say," she continues, smiling through the tears that have sprung to her eyes, "please don't speak to me on—on—this subject we have been discussing ever again. It—only—distresses me, and—it can do no good."

"Then you are determined not to let me help you?" he asks sadly.

She shakes her head.

"There is no help for me," she answers, in a tone so low he can hardly hear her.

He turns his horse's head homeward, and for the rest of the drive, until they reach "The Castle," the silence is almost unbroken between them.

"What will *Mr. Hastings* think?—*that* is a far more momentous question," the other señorita says slyly; and here speaks Rosalie Ralston, for she delights to prick her "darling Bee's" self-complacency by such pointed allusions to her quondam admirer's devotion to her cousin.

"This is on a par with Marygold's customary behavior," Mrs. Castleton observes in tones of righteous indignation (she is really delighted that Marygold will not accompany them, but she cannot let slip this opportunity to hold up the heiress' utter depravity to the gaze of her assembled guests—the Duke of St. Bride especially). "She has a perfect right not to go to the ball if she does not wish to, but she should show me, her aunt and entertainer, more consideration and respect than to leave it be to the last moment to let me know that she is not going, and have us all waiting for her; and she should come down herself and tell me her reasons for staying home, and not simply send her maid as if she was among strangers or at a hotel."

Bertram since hearing the maid's message has been speechless, but he finds his tongue at this—Marygold

always has a stanch defender in him, whether she is attacked to her face or behind her back.

“Mother, how can you expect Marygold to show you any consideration or respect, though you are her aunt, when you do not show her any affection, though she is your niece?” he asks indignantly.

This question is what he himself would call a “staggerer,” and his mother for once is disconcerted, for she can find no answer to it. It is with immeasurable relief, therefore, that she sees the carriages at this moment approaching, and hoping her silence will pass for contempt of her questioner and not inability to answer him, she sweeps majestically down the steps of the terrace and enters the foremost vehicle as soon as it stops.

While the others are entering the carriages, Bertram runs up to Marygold’s room to ask her if anything is the matter.

Her door is locked, but in answer to his question her voice is heard coming distinctly through the key-hole:

“*Certainly not!*—can’t I stay home from a ball if I want to without there having to be something the matter? I suppose you all think I’m dying! I’m not

dying half so much as you all are—for a ball! Do go, and leave me in peace!”

With this flea in his ear, he runs downstairs as fast as he ascended. All the folks have driven off but St. Bride, whom Bertram finds waiting for him. He chuckles to himself as he thinks that it would not have been so had not his mother beat such a hasty retreat, for she would have maneuvered as usual to get his grace in the same carriage with Beatrice.

“Nothing is the matter with your cousin, I hope?” St. Bride asks, with rather painstaking carelessness.

“Guess not!—said if we thought she must be dying to stay home from a ball, she’d give us to understand she wasn’t dying half so much as we are—to go,” Bertram answers shortly; and then flinging himself into the carriage, after St. Bride has taken his seat, he orders the coachman to “go ahead.”

They have hardly passed through “The Castle” gates, however, when he gives the check-string a jerk that almost breaks it, and before the astonished driver can bring his horses to a halt, kicks open the carriage door.

“You go on without me, St. Bride, I’m going back,” he explains, pausing as he is about to spring out, one

foot in the carriage, one on the step. "What's the confounded masquerade to me if Marygold's not there! Hang it all! she's spoiled the night for me."

"For me, too," St. Bride says quietly, "but because of that I wouldn't go back and perhaps spoil the night for her. She must have some reason for remaining at 'The Castle.'"

For a moment Bertram hesitates on the step, staring at St. Bride—then he flings himself back into his seat and pulls the carriage door shut with a bang that starts the spirited horses off at a sharp trot.

"I say, St. Bride, you're a man and I'm a selfish pig!" he bursts out impulsively. Then after a second's pause he adds: "You're the only man I know worthy of Marygold—why don't you go in and win?"

"That's a leading question," St. Bride answers, trying to speak lightly. "When a girl's not to be won, 'tis easier said than done."

"Of course, if you stop at every difficulty," Bertram answers a little impatiently. "Marygold's not the kind of a girl to be won easily—to fall into a fellow's hands like a ripe peach, like many another girl I know!"

"As if I hadn't cause to know that better than any one," St. Bride observes under his breath.

"What do you say?" Bertram asks quickly.

"Let's drop the subject," the duke says evasively. "You're a good fellow, Bertram, and mean well, I know, but you can do no good—you only torture me."

"Look here, St. Bride," Bertram flares out at this, "I won't be called a 'good fellow,' and told I mean well—I'd as lief you'd call me a good boy, and pat me on the head! Do you suppose if I 'torture' you, as you call it, I'm not torturing myself? Do you think it's easy work to tell another fellow to go in and win the girl you love, because you think he can, and is worthier of her? Just try it once and you'll find it's the very hardest work you ever did in all your life—you can only do it if you love the girl better than you do yourself!"

"And suppose you love the girl better than you do yourself," St. Bride answers in a low voice, "and she tells you plainly she despises you. It may be harder for you than it is for the fellow who tells you to go in and win her—his words are such a miserable mockery!"

"That's so—if you believe what the girl says," Ber-

tram admits after a moment's profound silence. "*I never take what a girl says without a grain of salt.*"

With which sage observation he lapses into silence, which is unbroken until the carriage stops at their destination, for the duke, perhaps not thinking he could improve upon this period, keeps silent also.

Fifteen minutes after Bertram knocked at her door it opens and Marygold—the heiress no longer, but a court-lady of the reign of Louis Seize, in an elaborate costume of that day and powdered coiffure—issues forth, followed by her maid, and softly descends the hall stairs.

The house is as silent as the grave, for the servants' quarters are too far off for any sound from there to be heard in the main part—it does not seem like itself without the gay laughter and airy nothings of conversation echoing through it.

Czar is stalking about the empty rooms, "the monarch of all he surveys," as if trying to discover the reason of its emptiness—or, more likely, find his mistress.

Poor old Czar! Marygold has sadly neglected him of late, and at sight of her, recognizing her under all her disguise, he behaves himself more like an over-

grown puppy than the sobered-down middle-aged dog that he is.

The front door is standing open, and suddenly Marygold pauses in her progress to it, and sniffs the incoming breeze—surely that is the smoke of a cigar that is wafted to her! With her hand upon Czar's collar she moves softly to the threshold and looks out. Ah! yes, she is right—there is the smoker! Seated on the terrace, his chair tilted back, his feet resting on the balustrade before him, evidently enjoying to the utmost the silent beauty of the night and the fragrance of his Havana, is Murray Stuyvesant.

Marygold is considerably taken aback by the sight—though she ought not to be surprised to see him, for if she had given the subject a thought she might have known he would not go to the ball—for she does not want any one to know of her expedition to-night.

She is bound for the ball after having sent down word to her aunt that she was not going! She meant she was not going with her party, but she did not put it that way because she keenly desires to attend the ball without their knowledge (she will leave it at midnight, the supper hour, when every one will have to remove their masks, so that no one need ever know

she was there, like a veritable Cinderella)—to be there in disguise while they are all commiserating her, thinking her at “The Castle.” She wants to be some one else for one night, to forget herself if she can—a thing she could never have done had she gone with her aunt, and had that lady’s constant surveillance over her to constantly remind her of their relationship. And here is Murray to detect her design and spoil everything—unless she can get him to promise to keep her secret—it is too provoking!

But perhaps he is asleep, and she can slip off without his seeing her. With this thought in her mind she is stealing noiselessly past him, keeping an eye upon him as a thief might who was making away with his watch and other valuables, when he opens his eyes. She halts guiltily, and then tries to look as unconcerned as possible—which is about as unconcerned as the thief would have looked.

“I thought you were asleep and was trying to pass without waking you,” she says, truthfully enough.

“I thank you for your consideration—I’m sorry I couldn’t have been asleep to oblige you,” he says dryly. “So it’s you! I didn’t recognize you in all that trumpery. Don’t tell me you’re going to the

ball after having told your aunt only ten minutes ago that you were *not* going—that you’ve changed your mind in that short time? How like a girl!”

Marygold resents this contemptuous exclamation.

“You see, I thought you were going when I told my aunt I was *not*—briefly, *that’s* why I have changed my mind!” she retorts.

“No, you didn’t think that—you know me better than to think I would go to a ball!” he exclaims with suppressed rage.

This is the truth, and Marygold does not dispute it—how foolish of her to provoke him when she wants to conciliate him so as to get a promise of secrecy from him.

“I don’t want to quarrel if you do,” she says sweetly. “One thing is, I haven’t got time for it—I must be off to the ball. Ah! there is the carriage now!” (As one she has ordered from a livery stable, for were she to take one of her aunt’s she would be discovered, approaches.) “You won’t tell on me, will you? I did not mean what I said a moment ago—I intended to go to the ball when I sent down word to the contrary. I meant I was not going with my aunt. It’s so stupid going to a masquerade with a

party—they all know you! I want to see if I can't be there without my aunt or any of the others recognizing me through my disguise. You'll promise not to tell on me, won't you?" coaxingly.

Stuyvesant looks rather suspicious of, than flattered by, this unusual affability; but thus appealed to, he cannot help but give his word not to betray her.

"But is it proper of you to go alone?" he asks uneasily.

"Oh! a masquerade is different; besides, my maid is with me," Marygold answers quickly, anxious to be off now that she has his promise.

"Come, Nora!" and with a parting pat on Czar's head, she runs down the steps of the terrace and enters the carriage, followed by the maid, who has respectfully stood back in the hall during this discussion; and at a word the driver whips up his horses and they are borne rapidly out of Stuyvesant's sight.

He returns to his cigar and his reflections, but the latter have become so bitter that the former can no longer soothe him, and, tossing it away, he rises, and pulling his hat over his eyes, and thrusting his hands down deep into his pockets, he leaves the terrace, and wends his solitary way down to the lonely cliffs.

CHAPTER XVII.

A QUARTER of an hour later the heiress alights from her hired conveyance at the marble entrance steps of Farrington house.

Her maid returns in it to "The Castle," for Marygold thinks it safer for her not to enter the house lest somebody might recognize her. But before the carriage drives off she tells Nora to be sure and have it at the door again at twelve o'clock *sharp*.

Mounting the steps, she enters the wide hall door—sentineled on either side by a couple of gorgeous flunkies in powdered wigs and velvet knee breeches, who stared superciliously at her humble equipage and now do the same to her, little dreaming she is the heiress, no doubt wondering how this unattended female came to have an invitation to *their* ball—and thence proceeds to the ballroom.

The ballroom of Farrington house is the finest in Bluepoint, and to-night, when this motley crowd of

maskers have taken possession, it presents a scene that appears to Marygold as she enters like some fantastic pageant conjured out of the "Arabian Nights Entertainments."

She feels secure in her disguise, for her abnormally high-heeled French slippers and stately powdered wig so increase her height and alter her appearance generally, while her mask completely conceals her features, that she does not think there is the least danger of any one recognizing her, especially as all the "Castle" people think her a mile away, and Mrs. Farrington also, for of course her aunt, with her usual charitable desire to make a mountain out of a molehill, has apologized elaborately for her absence. So she threads her way through the crowd, who cast many curious and admiring glances after her, wondering who this late arrival may be, to where Mrs. Farrington is standing unmasked to receive her guests.

She is conversing with a Knight Templar, something in whose appearance makes Marygold suspect he is Hastings, and catching a fragment of their conversation her suspicions are confirmed. By an odd coincidence they are talking about her.

"What do you think of Marygold Dare's absence,

Clifford?" Mrs. Farrington is saying. "Is it simply an affront to me, or does she wish to rebuff you through me—I being your sister, you know?"

"What a question, Isabel! I should think you had been long enough acquainted with Marygold by this time to know that she never hesitates to deliver her rebuffs squarely to the person for whom they are intended, without any second-hand business. It is an affront to you pure and simple," Hastings' voice answers distinctly, and it is plain from his tone that he is in a beastly humor—Marygold can guess why.

She feels very guilty and wishes she had not chanced to approach her hostess at this unfortunate moment. It is impossible to draw back now, for Mrs. Farrington sees her and turns to greet her belated guest, wondering who she may be, little suspecting the truth.

Disguising her voice by affecting a vivaciousness of speech in keeping with her assumed nationality, Marygold makes apology for her late arrival.

"But I'm hardly to blame—it's *so* far from *chère* France, you know," she says plaintively.

"Especially France of the time of Louis Sixteenth," Hastings here takes occasion to remark, with a sudden

change of voice from the disagreeable tones in which he spoke to his sister, to the most courtly accents. "Will you give me this two-step, ma'moiselle?" (It is just commencing, and is the second dance on the programme, the first having been danced before Marygold arrived.)

Though not a little confounded by the unexpected request, and his sudden change of manner—for it seems as if it might be because he recognizes her and the thought that she has come to the ball after all restores him to a good humor—she drops him an elaborate courtesy and answers coquettishly, "*Avec plaisir, monsieur*," thinking it best to be as amiable as possible with him, as that is furthest from her usual manner toward him, and so will throw him off the scent—if he is on it. And she will let him know she recognizes him lest he think she is only amiable with him because she does not—not thinking *she* could be amiable with him if she did.

"I have the advantage of you, Mr. Hastings," she says sweetly as he offers her his arm to lead her on to the floor. "I overheard Mrs. Farrington address you by name."

"Then, ma'moiselle, do you not think it only fair

to tell me your name?" he asks with undiminished courtliness. "You will be very cruel if you keep me in ignorance of it."

"*Demandez-moi pourquoi !*" she exclaims, laughing. "Fortune gave me the advantage—I did not come by it unfairly—if she is not as kind to you, *est ce ma faute ?* You must restrain your curiosity, monsieur, until twelve o'clock."

"Ma'moiselle, I bow to your decree, unkind though it be," he answers, making a low obeisance. "And, *après tout*, what's in a name! you have given me yourself for this dance, *c'est assez!*—the name can go," and placing his arm around her waist, he whirls her away.

Marygold picks out "The Castle" party as she circles around the room.

Bertram is pulling one of the Greek dancing-girls (whether Sibyl or Sylvia Smytherston-Smythers matters not to him—one is as bad as the other) around in a savage way that plainly says his mamma has compelled him to ask her for his partner—"though I wouldn't have done it hadn't it struck me that it was about the best thing I could do to act up to the character of a fool," he explains afterward to Robin

Hood, *alias* the Duke of St. Bride. Smytherston-Smythers *frère*, taking courage from Sir Walter Raleigh's cloak, has persuaded Queen Elizabeth to step the "light fantastic toe" with him, and, in truth, it has a very fantastic look as he steps it, for his eyeglass, which is as much a part of him as his eye—Marygold would expect to see it squeezed into his pale orb were she called to look upon him in his coffin—and which he cannot go without for one night even in deference to Sir Walter, but wears squeezed into his aforementioned pale orb, only half-concealed by his mask, persists in falling from its high estate, and flying off at a tangent to the full length of its cord as he revolves around, or else winding about his partner and himself, tying them together, as it were. It generally, on these occasions, ends its wild gyrations by becoming entangled in the lady's hair—whence it can only be extricated with great difficulty, to the confusion of its owner and the anger of the lady—but to-night it is not in such a mischievous mood and is content with making itself very evident, betraying its unconscious owner to all who see it.

Hamlet is dancing with one of the Spanish señoritas, Beatrice, it is to be presumed, or at least it is to

be presumed Hamlet hopes so. If not, if Beatrice is the other señorita and Hamlet's partner is Rosalie Ralston, she is sure to be dancing with Robin Hood, and Marygold looks around for him.

To her surprise, she finds he is not dancing, but is looking on, and—is it fancy, or do his eyes really follow Hastings and herself with strange intentness? She feels her color mounting high behind her mask. Is it possible he penetrates her disguise? Each time she passes him in the revolutions of the dance she tries to appear as unconscious of every one but her partner as if there was no one else in the room, and she dances her very best, her feet hardly touching the floor, *determined* to make him think her heart is as light as her heels—which it is far from being—that the girl under the disguise of the frivolous mademoiselle is as coquettish as she appears, and not Marygold Dare, who is of a very different stamp, as he has reason to know.

The other señorita is dancing with one of the maskers not of "The Castle" party, as is also Flora MacIvor, otherwise, Frances Fitz-Gerald.

The two-step ends and Hastings leads his partner to a seat.

"You must be warm," he says, "allow me," and taking her fan from her hand he begins fanning her industriously, showing no intention of leaving her, it evidently being his determination to constitute himself her cavalier for the night.

Marygold racks her brain for some device by which she can get rid of him.

"*En vérité, j'ai bien chaud!*" she exclaims. "Would it be too much trouble for you to fetch me a glass of water, monsieur?"

"I shall be only too happy," he responds, falling into her trap, without the slightest suspicion that it is a trap. "Only first promise me the next dance, ma'moiselle, or somebody may ask you for it while I am away."

"Not if you are quick," she answers artfully, and unable to get her to say anything less non-committal, he hastens away.

No sooner has he disappeared in the crowd than Marygold rises from her seat, and pushing apart the branches of a group of palms screening a doorway immediately behind her, she slips through, and finds herself in a kind of alcove, the French windows of which give on to the lawn at the side of the house,

and, after a moment's consideration, she steps through one of them.

The cool night air is inexpressibly refreshing to her after the heat of the ballroom, and with a breath of relief she makes her way to where a rustic bench is visible a little distance off, under a group of trees, from whose branches several gayly colored Japanese lanterns are suspended; and dropping upon it she gives a little laugh to think how she has outwitted Hastings, and wonders what he will think when he discovers it.

But the laugh dies on her lips, for the sound of footsteps falls upon her ears approaching from the house—can it be Hastings already in pursuit of her?

She turns her head to look, but it is impossible for her to distinguish in the darkness who the person approaching is until he comes within the circle of light shed by the lanterns, when she is hardly relieved to perceive it is not Hastings but the Duke of St. Bride—she had rather it had been Hastings as she recalls the intent look with which he followed her while dancing. Has he now dogged her steps to tell her he has recognized her? She has a retort on the tip of her tongue that will make him repent his rashness.

But what is that in his hand? *Her fan!* She must

have dropped it without knowing it in her hasty flight from the ballroom—yes! it is not on her *chatelaine*.

“Pardon me, but is not this your fan?” he here breaks in upon her cogitations. “I picked it up in the ballroom near the chair on which you were sitting.”

So, she has misjudged him—he has only followed her to return it.

Reassured by this thought, she answers vivaciously, extending her hand over the back of the bench to take the fan as he holds it out to her, “*Une mille grâces, monsieur!* You are very good to take the trouble to bring it to me.”

Unfurling it, she flirts it before her face, and glances up at him furtively from behind her mask as he stands for a moment looking down at her hesitatingly, as if undecided whether to say something he has on his mind or not. Evidently he decides *not*, and his errand being accomplished, he turns on his heel to leave her; but he has not taken more than half a dozen steps when, as though reconsidering his decision, he faces her again.

“Miss Dare, I see you think I do not recognize you, and I cannot leave you under that impression when I do,” he says with evident reluctance, as if he divines

how unwelcome his words are to her. "I thought it was you from the first moment you entered the ball-room."

For several seconds Marygold cannot say anything, she is so overcome with disappointment and chagrin. It is so exasperating to be told he recognizes her just when she was congratulating herself he did not—why couldn't he say so at first, when she was prepared for it? And of course if he has recognized her so easily, so has every one else!

"And I thought I was so well disguised!" she exclaims aloud, almost ready to cry with vexation. Her "lark" as Bertram would say, that she planned so carefully to escape detection, has come to a sad and untimely end. What did she come to the ball for? why not have remained at "The Castle?"

"I am really awfully sorry I've recognized you, Miss Dare, since it vexes you so, but I couldn't help it, you know," St. Bride murmurs apologetically, feeling it is rather a foolish thing to say, but not knowing exactly what else to remark, and wishing to say something to comfort her. "It's not that you're not disguised well enough, you couldn't be disguised better—I don't think any one but myself has recognized

you. No one I have talked with has the least idea who you are, and, of course, I won't tell on you."

"But, in that case, how is it you recognized me so soon?" Marygold asks a little forlornly, wishing to believe him, but doubtful in the face of this incontestable fact.

Were he unmasked she would see a quick flush deepen the bronze of his cheek at her words. He has to struggle with himself to keep back the passionate words that rush to his lips. He could tell her that he loves her and love can pierce any disguise; but were he to tell her this she would fling his love back in his face as something that dishonored her—the love of a duke for an heiress! Bah! his love is too sacred to be classed with such spurious stuff. She little dreams that he understands her feelings on this subject as well as she does herself, for his own are the same—that he would no more ask her to marry him than she would accept him. But he will tell her this this very night, he will no longer be misunderstood—it is his last chance—he is going away to-morrow! But not now—now he must answer her question. He finds it difficult to do so calmly.

"Something struck me as soon as I saw you that it

was you—I cannot explain why—unless it be that there are moments in our lives when the power of divination is given to us,” he says, forcing a smile in an effort to treat the matter lightly.

Marygold has nothing to say to this. It has suddenly struck her as rather strange that two people who have avoided each other sedulously for the past week, and not exchanged a word other than the barest civilities necessary between guests at the same house, should be here alone, conversing so confidentially, and at this thought she is seized with embarrassment, which increases as the silence following St. Bride’s words lengthens.

She has just told herself she can stand it no longer, when the sound of music from the ballroom falls upon her ears, and only too glad of an excuse, she starts up from the bench exclaiming, “That is the third dance just commencing! I cannot stay here any longer, I must return to the ballroom—people will be wondering what has become of me!”

But St. Bride places himself before her, determined that this opportunity for an explanation shall not escape him. “Only give me five minutes more—there is something I must say to you,” he pleads earnestly.

She stands arrested by his words—thrilled through and through in spite of herself. What does he mean by that imperative “something?” Are not all proposals prefaced in some such way? Is he going to propose to her? Would he dare after all her snubbings! Let him try it!—he shall learn there is one heiress in America who will reject him—duke though he be! But what does this trembling mean—this does not look as if she would have the strength to withstand him. She is forced to conclude her best safety lies in flight—ignominious though the conclusion be—so she says hurriedly:

“I cannot listen to you now—you must say whatever it is you wish to say to me some other time.”

“But I am going away to-morrow and will not have another chance to see you alone—you will take care to prevent that,” he says a little sadly. “What I want to say to you is nothing you need not want to hear.”

“I don’t care if it isn’t—I won’t listen to it!” she cries, clapping her hands over her ears in sudden terror. Of course, no man believes a girl does not want to hear a proposal of marriage—and especially does not a duke believe it of an heiress!

“What is it you are so afraid that you’ll hear?” he

asks, smiling behind his mask, as a glimmer of the truth suddenly dawns upon him. "Is it that you think I am going to propose to you? Do you really think so badly of me as that?"

She stands confounded, unable to deny the charge. How thankful she is that her mask conceals the burning blush that suffuses her face!

"I see you do," he resumes after a pause in which he has waited in vain for her to speak. "Your silence says what you have the grace to wish to spare me in words. Miss Dare, you have cruelly misjudged me—I am as proud and sensitive on this subject as you are. I would no more ask you to marry me than you would accept me, for I would no more marry an heiress than you would marry a duke."

She is overwhelmed with shame and mortification at his words. How egotistical—how unjust she has been! She has prided herself on despising, and being an exception to, those American heiresses whose chief aim in life is to purchase with their millions a titled foreigner for a husband, and, as if unable to believe any one else capable of sharing her high principles, instead of thinking he might despise, and be an exception to, those titled foreigners whose chief aim in

life is to be purchased by heiresses for husbands provided they will give a big enough price, she has scorned him as one of them—judged and condemned him without a hearing—not even giving him the benefit of a doubt. How vain, how unfair he must think her! The tables are turned—it is now his turn to scorn her.

Vexed inexpressibly by this thought, she will not acknowledge she has done him an injustice, and apologize properly, thus showing she is sorry for it. No, let him think what he likes of her—she will not humble herself to him by thus seeming to beg his forgiveness.

“Have you said all you wish to say?” she inquires, in a tone of voice that plainly implies her patience is well-nigh exhausted.

Whatever he thinks of such a question in the face of what he *has* said—of such cold-blooded ignoring of even the possibility that she owes him an apology—he only answers quietly:

“No, there is one thing more I would like to say. Now that at last you know I am not the fortune-hunter you thought me—had you but known, money is the last thing that could tempt me, as I have now

enough, and more than enough for all my needs, and money in itself has no attraction for me—that my motive is disinterested, will you not bury the hatchet and be friends?”

She marvels that he still wishes her for a friend—that he still thinks her worthy of his friendship, but, of course, she does not say so.

“Is it worth while entering into such a solemn contract at this late hour—when you go away to-morrow and it is not likely that we shall ever see each other again?” is what she does say in such a mocking voice he little dreams that the sudden sharp pang she causes him by this careless reference to their impending separation, perhaps till death, she feels no less herself.

“Yes, I think it is worth while though the contract be only binding for this night, for it will privilege me to ask you for the next dance that I else would not dare to do. And if it would make you feel that it were only an act of common friendliness to grant my request—why—it were worth while indeed!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“MA’MOISELLE, I consider you owe me the next dance, for you promised me the one just over, and it is not my fault that I’ve missed it, for I’ve been hunting everywhere for you for the last half-hour.”

It is Hastings’ voice that thus breaks in upon them and Marygold turns with a start to find him standing at her elbow, for absorbed in what St. Bride was saying to her, she has not heard his approach over the soft turf, nor seen him owing to the darkness. How much of their conversation has he overheard—stealing upon them in this dishonorable fashion? If he has heard her speak, he knows now who she is, if not before, for she has spoken in her natural voice to the duke since he told her he recognized her. But then would he still address her as “ma’moiselle?” No, he would be glad enough to let her know that he had discovered her. So he cannot have heard her, but it is evident from the manner of his claiming the next

dance that he heard the duke ask for it. How presumptuous of him to make such a claim—he has not the slightest foundation for it!

Hastings apparently is in nowise disconcerted by her ominous silence—possibly choosing to consider it means that she cannot deny the justice of his claim. But he at length waxes impatient.

“If we don’t return to the ballroom pretty soon, we will miss this dance, also,” he remarks. “It was forming when I left the house—it is the quadrille, you know—and though I’ve got a couple of places reserved for us in one of the sets, there is such a demand for them they may be taken if we are late;” and he offers his arm to Marygold.

But she does not take it.

“*Vraiment, monsieur, vous demandez trop!*” she exclaims, addressing him in the vivacious manner she before adopted when speaking to him to disguise her natural voice. “I gave you the two-step—I have no recollection of promising you the quadrille.”

It is not that she desires to dance with St. Bride. Oh, no!—but still less does she want to dance again with Hastings. It is simply a case of choosing the lesser of two evils.

“Possibly, *ma’moiselle*, you have no recollection of sending me for a glass of water?” Hastings remarks in tones of sardonic politeness. “Certainly you could not have wanted it very badly or you would have waited for me to bring it to you—I was not two minutes, you seemed in such a hurry about it. I know now it was only a clever *coup* to get rid of me.”

She blushes furiously behind her mask. Evidently he thinks she ran away from him purposely to enjoy this *tête-à-tête* with the duke. That is terrible—especially if he discovers eventually who she is! She must appease him—disarm his suspicions!

“Monsieur, you are very unkind to accuse me of being so designing when I am only absent-minded,” she says plaintively. “I forgot all about that glass of water almost from the time of my asking you for it up this moment.” (Which is the truth. That conversation with St. Bride has made her forget a good many things which she schooled herself to remember before it—that she hates him is one of them!) “And you, *monsieur*,” she continues, turning to the duke, “perhaps you would as lief I gave you the fifth dance on the programme since this gentleman says he has a prior claim to the quadrille?”

"Anything, ma'moiselle, that is agreeable to you is agreeable to me—I do not consider only my own feelings," St. Bride answers gravely.

"It's easy to be magnanimous when you gain by it—the fifth dance is a waltz," Hastings retorts sneeringly, feeling the reproof in the duke's tone, and smarting under it.

St. Bride colors under his mask to the very roots of his hair at this unjust aspersion—for until Hastings mentioned it, he did not know that the fifth dance was a waltz, and it is certainly only Hastings' own fault that it has fallen to him instead of the quadrille—but he does not reply to it, it is beneath his notice, silent contempt is all it merits. So, ignoring Hastings, he bows to Marygold and walks away.

She, too, colors deeply at Hastings' ungentlemanly speech. May not the duke think her sudden willingness to concede to Hastings' demands is owing to her having suddenly conceived the happy idea of giving him the waltz instead? She can hardly contain her anger against Hastings.

But she does not think it would be politic to quarrel with him just now, so she dissembles her wrath, and accepting his arm apparently with the greatest

pleasure when in reality she would like to pinch it, she permits him to escort her to the ballroom.

The quadrille is just commencing when they enter, and Hastings leads the way to the set in which he secured places, which another couple are just on the point of taking, for they are so late it was thought they were not coming.

To Marygold's dismay she finds this set is made up of members of the "Castle" party. She feels as if she were caught in a trap. How can she escape detection from Bertram's sharp eyes when dancing face to face to him (he is her *vis-à-vis*), and as to her aunt—already she feels her steely eyes piercing her, mask and all! Indeed, one and all regard her curiously, but this may be only because, as the duke said, they have not the least idea who she is, and are consumed with curiosity to know.

Hoping this is the case, she parries as best she can Bertram's absurd jests, that, while they hit at random his mother, sister, and indeed every one in the set impartially, she can tell are aimed especially at her—perhaps only because she is a new target for his inveterate teasing propensities, that his personation for the night of a fool (there may be some who do not

think he has to step very far outside the lines of his ordinary behavior to personate it with success) licenses him to give free rein to; or he may have some deeper motive—she cannot tell, but devoutly hopes the former supposition may be the true one.

At length he ceases his fire of words, to the relief of all his victims save Marygold, who fears such cessation may only be to allow himself thinking space wherein to muster his wits for a sudden and more resistless onslaught upon her; and her fears are verified when in two minutes he breaks silence, exclaiming with a prodigious sigh:

“I don’t see how I can have the heart to jest to-night, fool though I am, when Marygold, star of stars, moon of moons, sun of suns, is absent! Ah, *ma’moiselle*, fair though you are, your beauty would be eclipsed were *she* here, so you may bless your stars that she isn’t!”

Now, had this burst of eloquence come from any other lips than Bertram’s, Marygold would have been convinced that the speaker had not the least idea that he was addressing the object of his eulogy; but being Bertram—who she knows from experience is never more in jest than when apparently in dead

earnest—she is certain he suspects her identity, and that his words are intended to lull her to a false security, thinking she will then relax her guard over her voice and manner, when he will be able to take her by surprise—in other words, verify his suspicions. She determines to outwit him.

“In France we say ‘*Les absents ont toujours tort*,’ ” she observes pensively. “Evidently in America it is just the reverse—‘*Les absents ont toujours droit*’—that is, if all absent ones are so fortunate as to have some one to sing their praises as eloquently as you have those of the absent lady to whom you refer, monsieur—was it ‘Marigold’ you called her? What a *drôle* name!”

“Yas, isn’t it funny,” lisps Sir Walter Raleigh, *alias* Cholmondeley Smytherston-Smythers, in all seriousness. “I’ve often wondered how Miss Dware came by it.”

“Perhaps because she is an heiress, you know,” Queen Elizabeth remarks with perfect gravity. “It is very fitting, under the circumstances, that she should have something *golden* about her name.”

“I never thought of that!” exclaims the innocent Cholmondeley in accents that express the profound

admiration he feels for the brilliant intellect that *has* evolved it.

"Oh, yes! if she is an heiress that explains it," Marygold agrees artlessly.

"Didn't you ever hear of Miss Dware before?" asks Cholmondeley with as much wonder in his tone now as admiration before.

"Why, is the lady so famous?" Marygold answers in the most innocent voice imaginable.

This question seems to stagger Cholmondeley.

"Aw—no—not at all—that is, not that I know of," he stammers, as if it were a crime to be famous and he were afraid that it would get to the heiress' ears that he had inferred *she* was such a thing, and she would have him arrested for libel.

"Why, Sir Walter, I though you were more of a courtier than that," Bertram exclaims in mock surprise. "Of course Miss Dare is famous—she's a famous beauty."

Much to Marygold's relief, the quadrille terminates at this moment, for it puts an end to the discussion; though she flatters herself she has played her part in it well, she feels she could not have kept it up much longer,

Hastings leads her to a seat, but she has hardly taken it when she jumps up, exclaiming, "There comes that insufferable tease!" (For Bertram, having quickly disposed of his partner—one of the Misses Smytherton-Smythers, it is needless to state—is making a bee-line for them.) "I must escape him!" and while Hastings turns to see who she means, she quietly slips away, and when he looks around again she is lost to sight in the crowd, thus by a clever move escaping him as well as Bertram.

This is the second time she has outwitted him—she can fancy what his feelings are, and she laughs wickedly to herself as she hurries through the crowd, anxious to put as great a distance between them as possible, now and then glancing over her shoulder to make sure he is not following her.

At length, finding herself near the door of the conservatory, its flowery, dimly lighted interior appeals to her as just the place to hide herself for awhile from any one who may be in pursuit of her, so she crosses the threshold.

She encounters several lover-like-looking couples, too much absorbed in each other to notice her, however. She does not wish attention, so she avoids them,

and intent upon exploring this fragrant region, penetrates its inmost recesses, until coming upon a rustic seat under some tropical tree covered with brilliant crimson flowers, she drops upon it with a sigh of pleasure, feeling secure from all pursuit in this delightful retreat.

Leaning luxuriously back with her head resting against the smooth trunk of the tree, inhaling deep breaths of the rare, intoxicating fragrance of its flowers, and soothed by the tinkling of a fountain not far off, she falls to dreaming over the events of the night—especially her interview with the Duke of St. Bride.

Is it true—is it possible she has entered into a contract to be friends with him? Yes, the waltz she has promised him will seal it. Ah! that waltz—it must be nearly time for it now—she starts suddenly erect at the thought. What if she stay here and he cannot find her—will it be her fault or his that the contract is not sealed—that her promise is broken? Or will it be destiny? Destiny! how silly to think destiny would condescend to work its ends through such a trifling thing as a waltz! She is making a mountain out of a molehill. *He* said it would only be an act of common friendliness to give him the waltz, and it can

be even less than that—an act of the barest civility. And for such a trifle she would break a promise that is sacred to whomsoever made!

Assuring herself this is the only consideration influencing her—a desire not to break her promise—she rises quickly from her seat, and without one regretful thought for its attractions, retraces her steps to the ballroom.

She is just upon the threshold of the doorway when she perceives the duke detach himself from the crowd and quickly approach her, and then she knows, from the rapid beating of her heart, the real reason for leaving her retreat.

A waltz may be a small matter in itself, but she knows this waltz will not be trifling to her, and she stops short abashed. What though he will consider it only an act of friendliness for her to waltz with him, and though she assures herself it is even less—only one of civility, this is not only a friendly feeling that makes her heart beat so; and this being the case—when there never can be anything more than friendship between them—when he does not even ask for anything more—were it not wiser, better not to waltz with him?—to plead fatigue—anything to escape it?—

especially since Hastings implied she was anxious for it, as her hastening this way to the ballroom instead of letting him hunt her up seems to prove?

Thus she listens alternately to the "still, small voice," and the voice of pride—which usually speaks louder to her than that of conscience—and for the space of a minute she hesitates, as one might from plunging into a rapid torrent ready to bear them they knew not whither; but the next, the passionate, pleading waltz music just striking up sweeps over her senses, drowning the promptings of both pride and conscience, and she is carried away by a current of feeling she does not care to analyze, that she has never before given way to, under the influence of which everything is forgotten, the past and the future, and she only realizes that his arm is around her, her hand in his, and they are drifting together down the room, upborne as it were on waves of liquid melody.

"It is for the first time, and the last!" she whispers to herself, feeling her cheeks grow red and pale alternately beneath her mask—little dreaming with what infinite sadness the thought surges over him at the same moment. She is as utterly oblivious of every other person in the room as if they were its

only occupants, or as if all these weird, masked figures floating about them were but phantoms in a dream.

Perhaps it *is* all a dream, reality was never so sweet as this—ah, no! she must awaken presently.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE awakening comes sooner than she anticipated. The thought of it has hardly crossed her mind, when the voice of all voices the hatefulest to her says mockingly in her ear, "You seem to be enjoying yourself, *ma chère*," and turning her head quickly, she beholds Queen Elizabeth in the arms of Sir Walter Raleigh, drifting past her.

Never was there a more cruel awakening. In the state of warm exultation of feeling she is in, the consciousness that her aunt recognizes her chills her to the very heart, and she shivers as if an icy breath had touched her.

"What is it?" the duke asks anxiously, pausing. "Do you want to stop?"

He, too, has been oblivious of every one in the room but themselves, and has not noticed Mrs. Castleton pass them, nor heard her speak to Marygold, or he might not have had to ask what was the matter,

"Yes, please," she answers constrainedly.

He leads her to a seat in an alcove near which they have paused—which happens to be the very one through which she made her escape from the ball-room earlier in the evening—in which she will be unobserved by the dancers, and then he stands looking down at her for a moment silently with an expression in his eyes she dares not meet.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" he asks gently, after a silence that has become painful to her. "We are friends now, you know"—smiling—"and it is the special privilege and delight of friends to serve one another."

His tone almost breaks down her self-control completely.

"You are very kind—but—there is nothing," she murmurs, hardly audibly.

She marvels that she should be so subdued before him—what must he think of her!

There is another silence longer than the first. She is not cold now—her cheeks are burning—what would become of her but for her mask! She must break this dreadful silence.

"I am very sorry to make you miss the waltz—

please go and get another partner," she says with an effort.

"I would rather stay here, if you will let me," he answers simply.

If she will let him!—she trembles at his words. But she must not let him—she must get rid of him or she cannot answer for herself.

"But I would feel more comfortable if you would go—I would rather be alone," she says desperately.

"Ah! in that case I will not intrude upon you any longer," he exclaims quickly, and she can tell from his tone that she has hurt him—if he only knew, she has hurt herself much more!

Bowing, he turns to leave her and comes face to face with Hastings just entering the alcove. He merely glances at him and then passes by without so much as a nod of recognition, and Hastings sends a black look after him. Perhaps he thinks this is the reason she wished to be alone, is the thought that comes to torture Marygold—that she expected Hastings. Well, he will soon see him go the way he has gone; if she did not hesitate to dismiss him she certainly shall not hesitate to do the same with Hastings. What makes Hastings still shadow her though she has run away

from him for the second time? Is it that he too recognizes her? She would not be surprised now—nor care much!

And the less she cares, the less need has she to be particular about disguising her voice and manner, and being amiable toward him—something she never would have troubled herself to have been but for her fear of recognition.

“Mr. Hastings, what is the meaning of this intrusion?” she asks unamiably enough. “Your *sang-froid* amazes me. Twice have I flown from your society—do you want further proof that it is not agreeable to me? Will you force me to leave this alcove after having entered it for a moment’s rest, or will you have the kindness to leave me?”

“Miss Dare! so it is really you!” Hastings exclaims in tones of mock surprise. “Up to this moment, though my heart told me it was you, I have been incredulous, for though you have twice ‘flown’ my society, as you so poetically express it, you were so charmingly amiable while in it that I could not believe it was you, much as I wanted to. But now I can no longer doubt, for no one else could have uttered such a cruel speech. I deeply regret that my society

is disagreeable to you, but you should pity, not despise me, for consider, it is my misfortune, not my fault, that I am not a duke!"

Marygold's anger blazes up at this taunt, for she knows how unmerited it is.

"It is certainly your misfortune that you are not as courteous as the duke," she retorts quickly.

"Not being a duke you should not expect me to be as courteous," Hastings says sarcastically. "Miss Dare, I will leave you as soon as you answer a question I want to ask you. I overheard St. Bride speaking to you about a 'contract.' Now, we all know the only kind of contracts dukes and heiresses have anything to do with are marriage contracts, and I want to know if after all your boasted contempt of dukes you are really going to marry one?"

"Mr. Hastings, whatever else I have thought you, I have always considered you a gentleman," Marygold cries in a voice trembling with anger and conflicting emotions; "but the term is hardly synonymous with that of eavesdropper."

"Miss Dare, I have always thought you a lady, but a lady never condescends to call people names," he returns mockingly. "But a truce to this parleying!

The longer you are answering me, Miss Dare, the longer will you have to endure my society."

"No, I will not endure it a moment longer!" she cries passionately, springing up from her seat. "Let me pass, sir!" for Hastings deliberately places himself before her.

"Not until you allow me to offer my congratulations to the future Duchess of St. Bride," he answers in a voice that vainly strives to veil its bitterness with a sneer.

At these words Marygold shrinks trembling from head to foot as if she had received a blow. She opens her lips to speak, but words fail her and she cannot articulate a sound.

Hastings, seeing from its effect upon her that his supposition is false, wishes he could recall his words. But such a wish is idle now, the only thing left for him to do is to make an apology, and he is about to do so, when at this moment the branches of palms screening the entrance to the alcove are parted and Mrs. Castleton enters unmasked—for twelve o'clock has just struck—and no one would believe from the perfect composure of her face and manner that she has overheard Hastings' speech, and that it has

sounded in her ears like a deathknell to her cherished ambition.

“What is this I hear!” she exclaims playfully—the kind of playfulness a cat exhibits toward a mouse it is only waiting the opportunity to crush in its claws, “that *you*, Marygold, who have always boasted your scorn of those heiresses who invested in titles, have invested in one yourself? Impossible!”

Marygold has found her tongue by this time. Removing her mask now that disguise is no longer possible or necessary, she says in her natural voice—though it seems unnatural in her own ears, so strange and far away does it sound to her: “You are right, Aunt Elinor, it *is* impossible. It does not seem so to Mr. Hastings because he judges other people by himself and thinks they are not above doing what he is capable of—forgetting that there are *some* disinterested, high-principled people in this world.”

Hastings winces under the stinging lash of this speech.

“Miss Dare, when a man is racked with jealousy he is not responsible for what he says or does—that is my excuse for speaking to you as I did,” he says, quite humbly. “I was a brute, and richly deserve

punishment, and you have a right to feel deeply offended, but if you only knew what I suffered in giving utterance to the thought my jealousy conceived, you might think my offense was its own punishment."

Marygold is no more moved by this appeal than if she had not heard it.

"I don't want to talk to you," she says coldly, pitilessly. "I don't want to ever speak to you, or see you again."

There is a terrible finality about this dispassionate speech that makes Hastings realize there is no appeal from it—that it is all over with him; and the bitterness of the moment is added to by the consciousness that Mrs. Castleton witnesses his humiliation. He tries to retaliate as usual with some sarcastic remark, but words fail him, his tongue seems to cleave to the roof of his mouth—Marygold has turned the tables upon him—and for a moment he stands stiff and speechless as though stricken dumb. Then bending his head almost mechanically, he turns on his heel, and still silent, passes out of the alcove—and out of Marygold's life forever!

She and her aunt stand looking at each other after

he has gone, and for more than a minute the silence is unbroken. Then Mrs. Castleton says, in her very softest, sweetest accents—but the cat's claws were never more evident beneath the velvet paw—"What does this mean, *ma chère*? Is it that you feel sure of having caught the duke that you thus throw Hastings back into the sea? He's only a little fish compared with a duke! You know, *ma chère*, after having shown yourself such good friends with his grace as you have to-night, thinking no one recognized you, when you have all along made us believe you were bitterest enemies, you cannot expect us to ever again put any faith in your boasted scorn of titles or all your talk about high principles. You have taken us in nicely, *ma chère*—it was really very clever of you, very clever."

"Aunt Elinor, I have the same thing to say to you that I said to Mr. Hastings," Marygold answers calmly. "I don't want to listen to you."

"Probably not, *ma chère*; no one wants to hear that they have been found out—that their efforts to pass for what they are not have been discovered," Mrs. Castleton observes pleasantly. "But you must remember you cannot silence me as you did Mr. Hast-

ings—as your aunt and entertainer you owe me at least *some* consideration.”

“I owe no consideration to an empty name, Aunt Elinor, and such is that of aunt when applied to you,” Marygold answers steadily. “And that of entertainer is no less of a mockery as far as your treatment of me during this visit to your house is concerned. From the night of my arrival to this evening you have omitted no opportunity to make it intolerable to me—if that is your idea of entertaining it differs from mine on the subject! I will not endure such hospitality any longer. To-morrow I will leave ‘The Castle’ and neither for life nor death will I ever cross its threshold again.”

“How tragic that sounds!” Mrs. Castleton exclaims. “To-morrow—to-morrow—let me think,” putting her forefinger meditatively to her brow, “what befalls to-morrow? Ah, yes! I remember now—his grace leaves us! I might have known my poor house would have no attraction after *he* has left it. I can only hope all my guests will not take flight.”

Marygold grows scarlet—she had forgotten all about the duke’s leaving to-morrow. But of course her aunt will not believe this, nor any of her guests when

they hear of her intention. Well, let them think what they will—what is the opinion of such small minds to her? She will not alter her decision as if she stood in fear of it.

“You know as well as I do, Aunt Elinor, how abhorrent these duty visits to your house have always been to me,” she pursues evenly, not deigning to notice by denying Mrs. Castleton’s petty insinuation. “And you have made this one more unbearable than all the rest—for reasons I can guess. On previous visits, though you hated me none the less, being an heiress you were rather proud of showing me off as your niece. But then you had not a duke for your guest whom it is your ambition to marry to Beatrice, and what is an heiress for a niece to a duke for a son-in-law! So you have stopped at nothing to prevent my interfering with your plans, as you feared I would, notwithstanding I told you I would not marry a duke if I could—for like Mr. Hastings, being without honor or principle yourself, you cannot credit other people with possessing them.”

“*Ma chère*, you talk like a book!” Mrs. Castleton exclaims, in mock admiration. “What a pity you were born with a golden spoon in your mouth—you

might have made your fortune with the pen! What has inspired you so to-night? I never heard you talk so eloquently! I must ask the duke what he said to you in that long interview you had with him out under the trees—perhaps that will account for it. I'll go and ask him now before I forget it," and with a malicious little laugh she rustles toward the entrance of the alcove.

A moment more and she has disappeared, and Marygold hears the voice of Cholmondeley Smytherston-Smythers, who has evidently been hanging about waiting for her, asking her to let him take her out to the supper-room, toward which a general exodus from the ballroom is taking place.

"You may if you help me find the duke—there is a very important question I want to ask him," Marygold hears her aunt answer in a voice of suppressed amusement that tells her she is really going to question the duke on this subject, and has not said so simply to torment her.

What will he answer? Will he, knowing there is nothing in it, tell Mrs. Castleton that she has signed a contract to be friends with him? What mischief her aunt will make out of it! Well, she will soon be

past caring if she does—she will be home, and these three past weeks will be but remembered by her as a fevered, troubled dream. How glad she will be to leave “The Castle” to-morrow! She has contemplated such a step several times during the past week, for the thought of living through the seven more days still remaining of the time allotted for her visit has been unendurable, but something always held her back from taking it. *Now* the die is cast—her word is passed—and let people think what they may, she will not go back on it. She will leave the first thing in the morning so as to escape going through the farce of saying good-by to people she does not care a fig for and who do not care a fig for her—and to avoid saying good-by to the duke! Ah, yes! that will be difficult—only because “good-bys” are so perfectly ridiculous between people who really haven’t any good to wish each other, and not because she would be sorry to say good-by to him—oh, no!

No sooner has she arrived at the intention of leaving so early in the morning than it occurs to her that she will have to pack her things to-night, and therefore she must be getting back to “The Castle.” This reminds her that she ordered the carriage to come for

her at twelve o'clock—it must be half-past twelve by this time—is it still waiting for her, or has her maid, guessing from her delay that she has been discovered, driven back to “The Castle,” thinking she intends staying to the end of the ball—now that there is no necessity for her to run away at midnight, Cinderella fashion—returning with “The Castle” party? What a horrible ordeal that would be! She is seized with terror lest she will have to pass through it. She will make her escape—now is her chance. No one will see her, every one being in the supper-room.

She steps quickly through one of the windows behind her, and gaining the ground, starts on a run around to the front of the house where the carriage was to wait for her. She hears some one enter the alcove she has just left, and then Bertram’s voice calls, “Marygold, Marygold!” but she only runs the faster—she will not wait to be catechized by him too; she has had enough of it for one night!

She hears him spring from the window and come bounding after her. Now if the carriage is gone she is undone. But no! there it is—what a relief! A moment more and she is beside it, and ordering the man to drive back to “The Castle” as fast as he can,

she jumps in, and pulls the door shut after her almost in Bertram's face. She could laugh at his baffled, disconsolate expression as they bowl rapidly away from him and he is left standing alone on the drive, did she not feel so disconsolate herself.

The further she gets from the scene of the night's experience—the more she tries to forget all that has passed in the last few hours and fix her thoughts only on the morrow—the more persistently, the more intolerably it all presses upon her brain and heart, until, but for the presence of her maid, she would cry out with the torture of it all, and she has to set her teeth and clinch her hands as if in mortal agony, to control herself and keep silent.

She went to the masquerade hoping for one night to be relieved from the strain, the painful tension to her of the situation, as it had developed of late, between herself and the Duke of St. Bride, with her aunt and other guests as amused spectators. Instead, she has only complicated the situation all around, so that another day at "The Castle" would be simply undendurable, and her only relief is in flight.

And yet—and yet—if she had the night to live over again, though she knew what it had in store for her

—all the bitterness, ay, and all the sweetness, for though it was mostly exceeding bitter was not that waltz exceeding sweet?—would she stay away from the ball—would she miss that waltz?

She has been for one moment in Elysium—is it not worth the price?

We must pay for our glimpses of happiness in this world—it is only unhappiness that comes to us gratis.

CHAPTER XX.

It is not yet seven o'clock when Marygold and her maid leave her apartments next morning all prepared for their journey home to Philadelphia. The trunks and other pieces of baggage have been taken downstairs on the elevator by Sambo, the porter, who is so different from the baggage fiends one generally associates with the name of porter that Marygold's caution to him not to make a noise—for she did not wish to disturb Mrs. Castleton and her guests, who will not rise for a couple of hours yet—was quite unnecessary, for Sambo handles trunks as if they were eggs. Nothing he likes so much as to have one express surprise at his gentleness, when he always has the same speech to make, prefacing it with a grin that displays a double row of ivories as white as his skin is black.

‘Ise dunno nothin’ ’bout dem fellahs dat works at railway stations. Ise neber ’sociates wid such trash. Ise only hauls trunks for ladies and gentlemen—

de best in de land! Deys has to haul for eberybody—eben niggers, ho, ho!”

As Marygold passes Bertram’s door she pauses, seized with remorse—she cannot go without bidding him good by.

For several minutes she taps softly at the door without receiving any response. Then she hears his voice growl in drowsy accents, “Who’s there? What the deuce do you want, whoever you are, rousing a fellow at this time of the night!”

Seven o’clock in the morning is to Bertram what three o’clock is to less lazy mortals.

“It is I—Marygold. Hurry and get up, I want to bid you good-by,” she whispers through the keyhole, knowing this piece of information will thoroughly awaken him—and it does. She hears him bound out of bed with an exclamation of amazement.

The house is as silent as the grave—save for the stealthy movements of the well-trained servants engaged in their customary morning occupations—as Marygold descends the grand staircase. The hall door is wide open and the morning breeze, sweet with the perfume of flowers and pungent with the salt of the sea—that she can see through the doorway lying far

below her, sparkling in the morning sunshine—greeted her refreshingly; and as standing upon the threshold she draws in deep breaths of it, the weight that lay heavy upon her heart during the night seems lifted, and she stretches out her arms with a little glad gesture like one from whose shoulders has fallen a heavy burden.

“How beautiful the world is—how very beautiful!” she whispers to herself. “What supreme folly for one to fear one’s life may be forever dark”—a fear that assailed her during the darkness of the night—“if *some one* goes out of it for aye! As if the sun will not shine on the same as ever! Nature is enough—at least for such dispositions as mine!”

At this moment Czar—who has been sitting in the court watching with the deepest attention Sambo loading Marygold’s trunks on to his cart, much to Sambo’s uneasiness, it is needless to state, and he took care to keep each piece of baggage as he handled it between himself and the mastiff who, he feared, was contemplating an assault upon him—stalks into the hall by the door opposite to that at which Marygold is standing, and gravely approaches her, uttering a series of peculiar guttural sounds (a way he has when

excited—he seldom barks and when he does his deep bass notes sound more like the rumbling of distant thunder than the “how-wows” of ordinary canines), as if he has recognized the trunks Sambo was making away with, and came to ask his mistress what it meant.

“We’re going home, Czar; aren’t you glad?” she cries, catching him around the neck and hugging him tight. “Come! let us run down to the beach—we mustn’t go without saying good-by to our old friend the sea! Nera, if Mr. Bertram comes down while I am gone, tell him to follow me.”

Holding on to Czar’s collar with one hand, she gathers up her skirts with the other, and runs fleetly off the terrace and down the lawn to the cliffs.

She feels like her old self again—that happy, care-free self of those days so very very long ago, it seems to her though only three weeks of actual time!—before she came to “The Castle”—the self she will never be again, her heart knows that, whatever her pride may say to the contrary! This is but a fleeting glimpse of it—it cannot last long; let her make the most of it while it does!

On the brink of the cliffs she pauses undecided whether to descend them or not—but only for a

moment. The ocean is calm as a river, for it is low tide, and the lapping of the tiny waves upon the beach sounds in her ears like voices calling to her to come down to them.

"They say it is very rude in us to bid them good-by from away up here, Czar," she laughs. "Come, we will go down and have a farewell handshake with our old friend."

Down the rocky path they go—mistress and mastiff together, and when they reach the sands, Marygold still holding tightly to Czar's collar, half leads, half drags him—for Czar does not feel like taking a bath this morning, and he thinks it is only for this that she has brought him down with her—to the very edge of the water.

Stooping down, she lets the little waves break over her fingers, and then makes Czar go through the same handshaking performance, as she calls it, by standing with his forefeet in the water. He submits like a martyr to the cause, but he looks as if he did not know what to make of his mistress disporting herself so childishly.

"Poor old Czar! you think I've lost my senses, don't you?" Marygold cries, laughing. "Or my heart!"

she whispers in his ear, "which, perhaps, amounts to the same thing."

While speaking she has risen from her stooping posture, and now stands erect. Wondering what is keeping Bertram—he is not often so tardy answering a summons of hers—she glances up at the cliffs to see if there is no sign of him coming. Ah, yes, there he is now!—but no! what does this mean?—do her eyes deceive her?

This is not Bertram descending the path in the cliffs—it is the Duke of St. Bride!

In a moment it flashes across her mind that this is Bertram's doings. He has sent the duke to bid her good-by, and has not come himself so as not to be in the way, for he thinks—with what truth her heart alone knows!—that she cares for his grace and he for her, and that they are only kept apart by their mutual sensitiveness on the subject of their relative positions as duke and heiress, which, he reasons, must be forgotten in all-absorbing grief if they are given the opportunity to say what, as matters now stand between them, is likely to be an eternal farewell, for at such a moment each must betray those sacred feelings to the other, and then, it being impossible to return

to their former attitude of apparent indifference, they will have to come to some understanding.

Instead of remembering how self-sacrificing he is to do this, Marygold only thinks how he has brought about by his meddling the very thing to avoid which it was her most urgent reason for leaving before any one was up—the necessity of saying good-by to the duke.

By this time he has descended the cliffs, and is approaching her over the sands. She feels the blood rush into her cheeks, and then recede back again—back to her very heart, turning her almost faint, and she holds desperately to Czar's collar for support. But even Czar, as if collegued with Bertram to make her surrender to the duke, goes back on her, for no sooner does he see who it is approaching them than he breaks away from Marygold's restraining hand and goes bounding to meet St. Bride—with whom he has become fast friends—and Marygold is left standing alone, deserted, her back to the sea, unable to retreat, feeling like one brought to bay.

She is as white as a moment ago she was red, and fear—of herself—makes her tremble. Nevertheless, her bearing was never prouder, and she throws back

her head and meets the duke's eyes defiantly, as he draws near to her.

He is the first to speak.

"Miss Dare, Bertram has gone to the station to buy your tickets, and look after your baggage—he told me to tell you," he says, with a tinge of sadness in his voice, for he cannot help but see how exceedingly unwelcome his coming in Bertram's stead is to her.

"Indeed! Bertram is very kind," she answers, and in her efforts to speak quite calmly and not betray her inward tremor, her voice sounds cold and hard. "But I could have bought the tickets myself and Sambo would have looked after the baggage, so it seems to me his kindness is superfluous. I only wanted to say good-by to him—I did not ask him to send a substitute."

Could any speech have been more cruel—cruel to herself as well as to him? Her heart cries out against its cruelty as she sees him wince as though she had stabbed him.

"Especially when I am that substitute—that is what you mean, is it not Miss Dare?" he says, trying to speak lightly. "And only last night we agreed to

bury the hatchet and be friends! Why, even you would say good-by to a friend, wouldn't you, dear old Czar?" he murmurs, bending over the dog to hide the emotion betrayed in his face.

A silence, broken only by the gentle ripple of the waves, follows his words, during which Czar looks wistfully from his mistress to his friend as if he would like to act as peacemaker between them. The duke is the first to break it, for Marygold cannot trust herself to speak. She is consumed with a wild wish that the sands might give way and swallow her, or the waters rise up and mercifully cover her—anything rather than stand here and face him, and repel him! Ay, that is the difficulty.

"I deserve this cold reception, Miss Dare," he says, standing erect and facing her squarely, having regained his composure. "For I knew I ought not to undertake to bear Bertram's message to you—that the dear fellow only made up to give me a chance to—to—see you, you know, before you went—for I knew you would not have decided to go at such an early hour if you had not wished to avoid seeing any one—especially me."

Instantly Marygold's pride is up in arms. If he

has guessed that she wished to avoid him especially may he not have guessed the reason?

“Allow me to ask what makes you presume to think I would wish to avoid you any more than the Messrs. Smytherston-Smythers or Fitz-Gerald?” she demands haughtily.

If after classing him with these gentlemen, who, he knows well, are the objects of her profound contempt, he can still doubt that she is indifferent to him, his vanity is hopeless!

“Because you seem as if you could not tolerate the sight of me,” he answers quite simply.

As if to verify his words she turns from him abruptly.

“I cannot linger here any longer or I will miss my train,” she says hurriedly, starting up the beach toward the cliffs. “Come, Czar!”

Czar obeys, but on looking back and finding the duke is not following he deliberately halts and looks at his mistress and then at his friend as if to say: “Not unless he comes too.”

The blood rushes into Marygold’s face—has Czar come to love the duke better than her? Yet in her heart she cannot blame him.

"Will you come? I am afraid Czar will not unless you do," she says without looking at St. Bride, in a hardly audible voice, and almost choking over the words—he thinks it is with anger that she has to humble her pride to ask this of him, but it is really something very different.

"Gladly," he answers in a low voice, yet, despite the genuineness of his tone, she fancies he is laughing in his sleeve at her.

So, each misunderstanding the other, they ascend the cliffs in dead silence—she on the alert to haughtily refuse any assistance he may feel called upon to offer her, he not daring to offer any—and when they reach the lawn and, still silent—for now the silence has lasted so long they find it difficult to break it—and walk up to the house, though they appear to be at peace with the world and each other, Czar, bounding between them, rejoicing in his success as a peace-maker—oh, foolish Czar!—is the only one to feel any satisfaction in the situation.

Marygold wonders nervously if this sort of thing will go on until they reach the station. She and Nora are to walk there—for it is not very far from "The Castle" and she has not ordered a carriage as

she would have to do so without her aunt's knowledge. Will the duke have to act as their escort to suit the autocratic Czar's whims?

"I never knew you to behave so badly, Czar—but you are going to be good now, aren't you?" she says coaxingly when they reach the terrace. "Come, say good-by to the duke—give him your paw—he was very good to humor you—we have to go now to the station."

But Czar stands with his forefeet planted firmly upon the ground in a determined way that plainly says he does not intend to say good-by to the duke—he does not intend to move from this spot unless his grace comes too, and not all Marygold's coaxing can budge him.

Feeling it is derogatory to her dignity to coax him any longer, she desists, biting her lips to hide their trembling—it hurts her so to have Czar treat her in this way.

"All right, Czar, if you prefer to stay here with the duke to coming with me, you may," she says, striving valiantly to speak quite steadily. "He is yours," she continues, addressing the duke but not looking at him, "he has chosen between us—he has shown

plainly that he cares more for you than he does for me. Oh! Czar, I wouldn't have believed it of you!" she breaks off with something like a sob in her voice.

But she recovers herself immediately.

"Come, Nora, we must be off," she says hurriedly to the maid, who is standing near; "we cannot delay any longer," and without another look at Czar, she starts off at a rapid pace down the drive.

The shrubs and other objects she passes are blurred and indistinct to her vision because of the tears through which she sees them. Her thoughts are in a whirl. Last night it seemed to her she quaffed the cup of sorrow to its very bottom, but it appears the bitter dregs were left for her to drain now. How could she foresee that she would give Czar—Czar, from whom she has always thought death alone would part her!—to another this morning; and that other him to whom she has already given her heart—as if that were not enough! Assuredly, the world is coming to an end—for her!

She hears her maid's light steps hurrying after her, and then a heavier tread, and simultaneously Czar comes bounding up to her with an agility that reminds her of his youthful days. She is so glad that he has

come back to her that she catches him round the neck, and half-laughing, half-crying, buries her face in his shaggy coat, exclaiming:

“Oh! Czar, you really love me best, don’t you?”

That heavier step draws nearer, and looking up she sees the duke, and then she knows that Czar has only come to her because he has succeeded in bringing his grace. Instantly she unclasps her arms from about his neck and pushes him angrily from her.

“Go!” she cries passionately. “I hate you!”

“Don’t be angry with Czar, Miss Dare,” St. Bride interposes quickly. “Of course he loves you best—he only pities me for being left behind. He would not stay with me a minute, I know, once you were really gone—he would follow you to the ends of the earth, I am sure.”

She is so pleased with this speech that she quite relents toward the speaker.

“Do you think so?” she says, for the first time in her intercourse with him letting a little coquettishness creep into her tone. “So did I until this morning—henceforth I shall have my doubts. I did not imagine Czar thought you were to be pitied for being left at ‘The Castle’—it has so many attractions, you

know! If you think so, too—why—do walk with us to the station—just to please Czar.”

He does not speak immediately, and though she has dropped her eyes she can feel his fixed upon her face, and she knows he is trying to solve the meaning of her new mood.

But she is a riddle that is hard to read, and he gives her up. Nevertheless, there is a thrill of intense happiness in his voice, such as she has never heard there before, as he answers her:

“I would do anything in the world to please Czar—he is my best friend. He has made this the happiest morning of my life.”

So “just to please Czar” they take up their march again in the same order as on their way up from the beach—save that the maid brings up the rear—Czar walking between them more triumphant than ever.

CHAPTER XXI.

THEY have reached "The Castle" gate by this time, and as they pass through and turn their steps into the road, deserted at this hour, leading to the station, Marygold draws a breath of relief; but the next moment she looks back over her shoulder with a sigh of regret.

How fair and stately the gray, ivy-grown tower of "The Castle" looks in the early morning sunshine! She bears the place no grudge—it is only its mistress who disagrees with her. Now that she has turned her back upon it forever she cannot forget that it was there that she met her fate!

Yes, she will acknowledge it this morning, and the thought does not make the morning any darker—there never was such a beautiful morning! Nor does it make her unhappy—not only is she happier than she has been for three weeks, but she cannot remember

when she was ever so happy before. It is the happiest morning of her life, too!

Then it does not take much to make her happy—just walking along a commonplace road with Czar—and the duke! She is curious to know if the duke's happiness is the result of as trifling a thing—walking along a commonplace road with Czar—and herself! She will ask him.

"I fail to see how Czar could have made this the happiest morning of your life—rather I should have thought he would have made it just the reverse, he has been so exceedingly self-willed and autocratic in his behavior," she remarks, in the most innocent tone of voice imaginable.

"Do I not owe to him this walk?" he answers gayly.

"You must be very fond of walking," she observes demurely.

How strange, how sweet it is to talk to him like this!

"I am—with you," he assents softly. "And think"—after a moment's eloquent pause, in a voice of profound sadness—"it is for the first time and the last!"

Her thoughts revert swiftly to that never-to-be-for-

gotten waltz, also distinguished by being their first and their last, and she says hastily:

“Then don’t let us think of it!”—softly—“let’s only enjoy it! This is such a lovely morning—let us banish all ugly thoughts. For instance, let us forget that you are a duke and I an heiress. I’m sure it’s only our constant remembrance of the fact that frets our pride and makes us quarrel so. If we could forget it for the next quarter of an hour, we might be able to get to the station without falling out; don’t you think so?”

He does not answer, but looks down at her with an expression in his handsome eyes before which hers fall, while her color rises.

“Silence gives consent!” she exclaims with averted face. “So, then, it is forgotten! You are just plain Mr. St. Bride and I plain Miss Dare, without a cent to my name! Now we will have a chance to see if we would have gotten along more amicably together had fate been kinder!”

Still he is silent and she fears her blushes will consume her.

“How can we tell whether we would have or not if

we do not say anything?" she at last bursts out desperately, unable to longer endure the silence.

"There is one thing I want to say to you, but I fear you will be angry if I do, and I cannot trust my tongue to say anything else lest it utter it despite me," he answers in a smothered voice.

"Now you have excited my curiosity and I will not be content until I have heard it," she murmurs, feeling herself a very hypocrite for love quickens her to love, and she guesses what it is—her heart is beating so wildly in her bosom she trembles lest he hears it. "And I promise you not to be angry—now that I am not an heiress, nor you a duke!"

"Ah! Marygold, Marygold, you know it," he whispers. "I love you."

"I love you," the little birds seem twittering in the high hedge bordering the sides of the road. "I love you," is the burden of the singing of the far-off sea in her ears. "I love you," her heart echoes gladly; and raising her eyes to his she says softly, "I promised you I would not be angry and I am not. And you must promise me you will not misunderstand me—you will remember it is not the heiress who is speaking—when I tell you that I love you."

They have come to a bend in the road, and are out of sight of the maid—who discreetly lags behind them—and involuntarily they pause, and stretch out their hands to each other over Czar, who stands still as a statue between them, a benign expression on his intelligent countenance as if he understands perfectly what is going on and gives it his august approval. And standing thus, hands clasped in hands, glance holding glance, their lips meet, and in the ineffable sweetness of that kiss, their probation in the past, their separation in the future—everything but the moment is forgotten—a moment worth all the rest of their lives, only to have lived which both feel, let come what will, they have not lived in vain!

Then the maid's step sounds around the bend, and they start apart, their hands unclasp, and silently they continue on their walk.

It is several minutes before either of them can speak again, and Marygold is the first to make the effort.

"Our walk is half over, and we have not fallen out yet!" she exclaims with an attempt at a laugh, bravely trying to treat the situation lightly to relieve its somberness. "I think it is proved beyond a doubt that

we would have gotten along excellently together had fate been kinder, do not you?"

"Let us cheat Fate," is his answer. "She gave me a title and you a great fortune—let us throw them back in her face, then she can no longer separate us. We can get married—what do we want with title and fortune then?—love is enough!"

"Oh, if we only could!" Marygold cries, with all her heart.

"Nothing would be easier," he says eagerly. "I only have to become a citizen of the United States, and you to found some great charitable or educational institution, whichever you prefer—in your father's name, if you would like. The dukedom of St. Bride and estates pertaining to it would go to my cousin, Lord Burleigh, but I would still have a considerable personal estate—enough to live handsomely upon—I would not ask you to marry a poor man."

"Would you really give up so much for me?" Marygold asks wonderingly.

"So much! Oh! darling, though I had to give up a crown instead of a coronet, do you suppose I would for one moment weigh it in the balance with you?" he answers.

"I don't know, it's hard to understand how any one could give up a kingdom for such an insignificant little thing as I am," Marygold says, shaking her head drolly. "Yet I remember King Richard III. when he was in a dire strait exclaimed, 'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!' I dare say I'm worth as much as a horse! What makes you look so reproachful? Are you wondering how I can jest at such a moment? Think! I will have all the future to weep—let me laugh while I may!"

"Is, then, the prospect of a future spent with me so gloomy to you that you think it will be passed in tears?" he asks, trying to smile.

"You know I don't mean that!" she cries, half-laughing, half-crying. "I wish you wouldn't say such things. You make it all the harder for me to say what do I mean—that we can never marry—no, not even if you can get rid of your title, for I cannot get rid of my millions, either in the way you suggested or any other way. Papa tied them up so in his will for fear the man I married—and who might marry me just for my money—would get hold of them; and I would not break papa's will—no, not to keep my heart from breaking! Poor papa! how little he dreamed his

forethought, that he meant only for my good, would prevent me marrying a man even *he* would have been content to give his daughter to!—and from ever marrying, for if I cannot marry you I will never marry—perhaps that will be some consolation to you. I have always said—from the time I gave a thought to such things—that I would never marry, not thinking I was renouncing much having never met any one I could care for—until—I met you. Now it will be very hard.”

A profound silence follows her words and after a minute or two she glances up at him a little timidly. He is very pale, and she can tell from the workings of his features that he is struggling hard to maintain his composure. He has kept a strong hand on himself all along; if he should lose his self-control now, she wonders whether she would still be able to maintain hers.

But she is not put to the test, for in a few minutes more he masters his emotion sufficiently to trust himself to speak.

“Yes, the future will be very hard to live for both of us,” he says with forced calmness. “Yet now that we know we love each other we should be able to en-

sure anything it may have in store for us—separation, even death, for surely we belong to each other for life, for death, in heart and soul as much as if we exchanged marriage vows—and—who knows?—perhaps some day we will! Fortunes large as yours have been lost before—in a day, an hour! Your millions may some day go the way others have gone, and then you will be free to marry me.”

“True, I never thought of that! Murray Stuyvesant might turn out a villain to accommodate us, mightn’t he? like the villains on the stage, and mismanage my affairs, and then run off to Canada—isn’t Canada the Mecca of all such accommodating villains?—with as much of my millions as he could save from the wreck, in his pockets, kindly leaving me penniless, like the beggar maid in the fairy tale, and you would be the prince to come to my deliverance!” Marygold exclaims, forcing a laugh. “But I’m afraid there’s no such good fortune in store for me. Those people who value their money above everything in the world will be the ones to lose it, while I, who would give mine away if I could, will be burdened with it until I die—such is the contrariety of Fate! But after the happiness that much-abused dame has per-

mitted me to enjoy this morning—last night I thought I would never be happy again—I dare say it is ungrateful to rail against her. Perhaps some day she will do me another good turn.”

“Perhaps!—anyway we will hope so, and in the meantime it will be happiness enough to know we love each other,” St. Bride says, smiling.

“And if you should grow tired of waiting for that day (I never will—I mean, as I never intended to marry anyway it will make no difference to me!), if you should grow to care for another and wish to marry her—why—you are free to do so; you know, you are not really bound to me. I do not consider this is the same as an ordinary engagement when it may drag on for years—or forever!”

She has said this thinking it is only fair to him, and has hidden with Spartan fortitude what it cost her, so he cannot tell but what she is really as indifferent to whether he remains stanch in his allegiance to her as appears from her careless way of speaking about his possible drifting away—as if such a thing could happen.

He had thought their love was different from the counterfeit article so often circulating under the

name—a coin bearing on its face the unmistakable stamp of selfish considerations or mutual convenience, and very rarely containing even a few grains of genuine affection—that it would be eternal as eternity, changeless as destiny, and that neither would any more doubt the other's constancy than they would doubt the stars', nor be any more affected by earthly considerations or conditions than are they. And to be so soon awakened! Would that he had died first—death were less bitter than this death of all his hopes!

He does not utter a word nor give her one glance of reproach, but his face is white to the lips, and Marygold sees in a moment that nothing she has ever said to him before, cruel as some of her speeches have been, has hurt him like this, and she is glad—glad!—for it proves to her beyond all doubt or fear that there is not the slightest danger of his doing what it tortured her only to name.

She glances over her shoulder. Nora is out of sight again, there is no one in the wide world to see her—save Czar, who still walks between them, and he won't tell on her! Pushing him out of the way, she clasps her hands softly around St. Bride's arm and looks up

at him with her most brilliant smile, though her eyes are filled with tears.

"Please forgive me," she whispers.

"Oh, Marygold, how could you say it!" he exclaims in a voice stifled with emotion. "You have broken my heart!"

"Would a kiss mend it, do you think?" she asks softly.

.

Five minutes later Bertram, standing on the platform of the station, his hands in his pockets, his hat on the back of his head, whistling as though his life depended upon it, to keep up his spirits, which are very low—because he has gotten up so early, he tells himself—sees them approaching him.

Instantly his whistling ceases, his face grows scarlet, and he turns to run, for he knows only too well they would not be walking together thus amicably—though Czar is between them—if they had not made good use of the opportunity he gave them to say good-by to each other; and now he wishes he hadn't been such a self-sacrificing fool as to do it. Then he pulls himself together, and faces them like a man.

"Takes you two a mighty long time to say good-by," is his greeting as they come up to him. "It was just a little after seven when I left 'The Castle;' it is now half-past eight. You've missed your train, Marygold; trains don't wait—even for lovers."

Marygold blushes furiously.

"Don't they? I dare say you know from experience—I don't," she retorts.

"When does the next train leave, Bertram?" St. Bride asks, wishing to relieve Marygold by changing the subject.

"Not for a quarter of an hour yet—plenty of time for you two to give an account of yourselves," he answers inexorably, seeing through St. Bride's move. "I feel my responsibility. Marygold is an orphan, and I'm the only relative she has to look after her, so your grace must excuse me for asking you your intentions."

"Don't be silly, Bertram," Marygold remarks crossly. The morning's experience is beginning to tell on her nerves, and she is not in the humor to stand Bertram's teasing—especially on this subject.

"Is *that* your gratitude for my anxiety on your

account!" he exclaims, rather crossly in his turn.

"Oh! you are the dearest fellow in the world, of course," she laughs, feeling remorseful.

"Am I, indeed!" he says a little shortly, turning from her abruptly, apparently only to look down the track and see if the train is coming.

"When you are not teasing," she amends.

"I'm not teasing now—I'm in dead earnest," he says, earnestly enough. "I think I've a right to know what sort of an understanding you and St. Bride have come to when I gave you the chance to do it. That you have made peace is as plain as daylight, or you wouldn't be walking so amicably together, but you might tell me all about it and not just leave me to guess. You haven't even said, 'thank you!'"

"The only reason I haven't, Bertram, is because nothing I could say could express how deeply indebted I feel to you—I thought you would understand that," St. Bride says quickly, divining the reason Bertram is out of humor and wishing to prevent any more friction between him and Marygold. "I owe to you the happiest hour of my life."

"He said something like that to you, didn't he

Czar?" Marygold murmurs, bending over the mastiff to hide the tears that have sprung to her eyes.

"Then I suppose you're engaged—and I'll have to congratulate you!" Bertram exclaims in a voice of such unequivocal repugnance, and showing so plainly by his look that he would far rather go and drown himself, that St. Bride says, laughing:

"Not if you don't feel like it."

"We're nothing of the kind," Marygold interposes hastily, but the effect of her words is somewhat spoiled by a vivid blush.

"Well, you look it—that's all I've got to say," Bertram retorts provokingly. "I never saw two people look more like lovers. If you're not, what are you then, pray?"

"Friends," she answers, hiding her face in Czar's neck.

"After having seemed like enemies for so long I can hardly realize it!" the duke exclaims gayly, hoping to divert Bertram's attention from Marygold to himself.

But Bertram is not to be so diverted—he pays no more attention to him than if he had not spoken.

"Friends!" he echoes derisively. "How long do you think that's going to last, may I inquire?"

"Forever and ever," Marygold answers almost inaudibly.

"Amen," says the duke.

THE END.

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